Lateral
JOURNAL OF THE CULTURAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION



Issue 5.1 (Spring 2016)

Editors' Introduction: Disciplinary Stakes For Cultural Studies Today — Stefanie A Jones, Eero Laine and Chris Alen Sula

SCROLL ▼ DOWN

Lateral
JOURNAL OF THE CULTURAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

ISSUE 5.1 (SPRING 2016)



Editors' Introduction: Disciplinary Stakes For Cultural Studies Today

Stefanie A Jones, Eero Laine and Chris Alen Sula



"A Black Man Replies": Claude McKay's Challenge to the British Left

Anne Donlon



From 'Hip Hop Revolutionaries' to 'Terrorist-Thugs': 'Blackwashing' between the Arab Spring and the War on Terror

Rayya El Zein



Informatic Labor in the Age of Computational Capi

Jonathan Beller



Mixing and Mingling Queerly: The Activist Sociality of Mentoring in the Personal Narratives of Coloma and Lorde

Ed Chamberlain

FORUM: EMERGENT CRITICAL ANALYTICS FOR ALTERNATIVE HUMANITIES, PART II



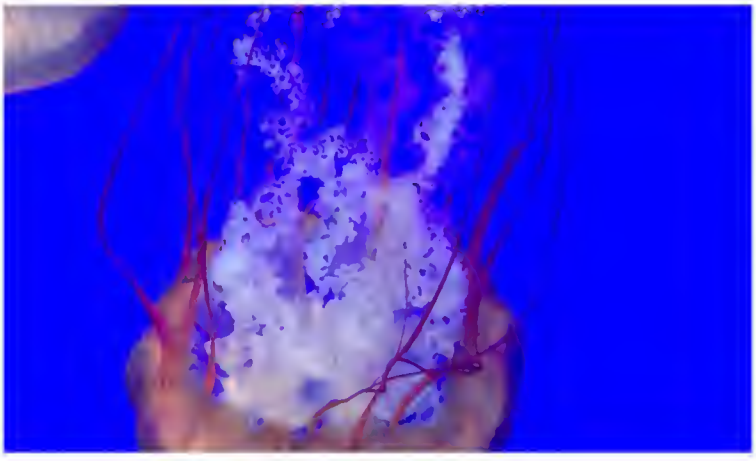
Forum Introduction: Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities

Chris A Eng and Amy K King



"A Structure, Not an Event": Settler Colonialism ar Enduring Indigeneity

J. Kēhaulani Kauanui



On the Limits and Promise of New Materialist Philosophy

Kyla Wazana Tompkins



Enabling Whom? Critical Disability Studies Now

Julie Avril Minich



Call for / and Response

Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanitie

Proceduralism, Predisposing, Poesis: Forms of Institutionality, In the Making

Jodi Melamed

Call for/and Response: Emergent Critical Analytics Alternative Humanities

Chris A Eng and Amy K King

Credits

Cover image: "Wood and Metal Transition by Artifex Textures; Article images (from left to right, top to bottom): "The West India Dock, North Quay," from Owen Douglas's "London: The Empire" (1914), 34; Still from "I Love Hip Hop in Morocco," by Joshua Asen and Jennifer Needleman, produced by Rizz Productions, Inc. 2007; Still from "10 Milliseconds of Trading in N Eric Hunsader; "Voyages, masks" by Joyce Kozloff; "LANDART" by flickr user streuwerk; "Colonialism" by George Kourounis; "Marsupial bridge" by Isabel Denning; "un phare en coc Lighthouse like a shell" by TisseurDeToile; and "Jellyfish" by Kyla Wazana Tompkins.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Lateral
JOURNAL OF THE CULTURAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Stefanie A Jones, Eero Laine, Chris Alen Sula, "Editors' Introduction: Disciplinary Stakes For Cultural Studies Today," *Lateral 5.1* (2016).

https://doi.org/10.25158/L5.1.1

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 5.1 (Spring 2016)

Editors' Introduction: Disciplinary Stakes For Cultural Studies Today

Stefanie A Jones, Eero Laine and Chris Alen Sula

ABSTRACT Editors' introduction to Issue 5.1. Includes an overview of articles in this issue, editorial announcements, and call for book review editor.

> [Cultural studies] does have some stake in the choices it makes. It does matter whether cultural studies is this or that. It can't be just any old thing which chooses to march under a particular banner. It is a serious enterprise, or project, and that is inscribed in what is sometimes called the 'political' aspect of cultural studies. Not that there's one politics already inscribed in it. But there is something at stake in cultural studies, in a way that I think, and hope, is not exactly true of many other very important intellectual and critical practices. Here one registers the tension between a refusal to close the field, to police it and, at the same time, a determination to stake out some positions within it and argue for them.
> —Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies."[1]

In many ways this issue of *Lateral* emphasizes the stakes and the relevance of cultural studies to our political moment. This moment is one defined by the expansion of the hierarchizing violences of neoliberal globalization and their impossibilities: refugees fleeing war to encounter nationalist violence; the 99% caught between austerity and the financialization of everyday life; workers trapped between unemployment and homelessness and unlivable labor conditions; the brutality and impunity of local police forces, particularly the state-sanctioned murders of black trans* people, women, and men in the United States, which is disseminated around the world through global military interventions; and those marginalized by their gender and sexual identities, trapped between outright exclusion and the unsatisfactory, anti-revolutionary project of liberal inclusion and incorporation. This issue of *Lateral* draws on a wide range of disciplinary and methodological practices that speak to shared concerns, goals, and, indeed, politics—to the places where cultural studies must take a stance.

This issue of *Lateral* taps into cultural studies' disciplinary and methodological potential at a time when such pointed interventions are more necessary than ever. Far from being "any old thing" that Hall warns us of, cultural studies is and must be imagined into the future as deliberately politicized work against the strengthening of disciplinary boundaries and other institutional barriers that function, in the academy, to limit the surviving and thriving of students and faculty already in oppressed positions. As the authors in this issue do, cultural studies must work against the writing of blackness out of the Left, must confront and counter the profits extracted from digital labor, and stand against the academy's rightward turn—and must continue to do so in an environment of

censure and limitation imposed by both liberal and conservative forces under the ultimatums and the pepper spray of the austerity agenda. Institutional and theoretical attention to the old and new legacies of cultural studies can draw only one conclusion: to move towards justice, to grow the radical academy.

An inter- and transdisciplinary cultural studies is not a project of generic "boundlessness," or an unlimited "anti-disciplinarity" removed from its historical material conditions. Rather, cultural studies must target those disciplinary boundaries that serve to police particular, material power hierarchies, disciplinarities integral to the reproduction of capitalism as well as the "production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death."[2] Without attention to the immediate materiality by which our disciplines serve capital and distribute power according to, and thus produce, hierarchies of race, gender, sexuality, and ability, we risk repeating other intellectual interventions that have become complicit with dematerializing the consequences of racial capitalism.[3] Some anti-disciplinary interventions are themselves politically-motivated academic projects oriented towards defending the academy from the very changes demanded by anti-imperialist post-colonialism, by women of color feminisms, and by materialist anti-racisms. Cultural studies must account for these structures lest it do the same.

To these ends, this issue features the first of a two-part forum, "Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities," edited by Chris A. Eng and Amy K. King. Here, the editors and their respondents identify and collectively contemplate four analytics entangled with such hierarchies in the humanities. These analytics structure thought across disciplines, yet resonate strongly with the specific ways that cultural studies has shifted, developed, and refined its focus and ideas in the first part of the twenty-first century: J. Kēhaulani Kauanui takes up settler colonialism; Kyla Wazana Tompkins, New Materialism; Julie Avril Minich, disability; and Jodi Melamed, institutionality. Together, these interventions challenge oppressive political orders in and beyond the academy into the organization of life itself. More than just deconstructing extant ideoepistemological restrictions, this forum constructively challenges the humanities, going forward, to begin from these points of departure. In this vein, *Lateral* is excited to invite responses to Part I of this forum, especially from students, junior faculty, and other emerging scholars. These responses will form the foundation for Part II of the forum, to be published in *Lateral* 6. The CFP is available at http://csalateral.org/wp/issue/5-1/alt-humanities/cfp.

In addition to the forum, the current issue of *Lateral* includes articles that intervene in a range of academic areas, from histories of the Left to Arabic hip-hop, from queer mentoring to new conceptions of Marx for the digital era. Through these particular entry points, these essays mark a number of parallels between and intersections within and across contemporary thought that remains rooted in the project of cultural studies.

Anne Donlon delves into the history of the British Left after World War I to assert the significance of the Black and feminist interventions of Claude McKay and Sylvia Pankhurst. Donlon centers the publication of "A Black Man Replies," McKay's letter to the editor published in Pankhurst's newspaper *The Worker's Dreadnought*, against white supremacist logics mobilized by prominent 1920s leftists that contributed to the reestablishment of policing of and violence against black men. Donlon's archival discoveries weave together biography, material cultural analysis, and histories of trans-Atlantic activism, and, in the process, reveal the labor of building radical intersectional solidarity that came before and followed the moment of "A Black Man Replies."

Rayya El Zein takes up a global analysis of how ideas of blackness, whiteness, and Arabness circulate in post-9/11 media accounts and argues that these concepts work to

mediate Western understandings of politics in the Arab world. El Zein unpacks the paradox by which blackwashing is differentially deployed to mark certain Arab subjects as a "good rapper" or a "bad rapper," and how both of these valences serve to expand neoliberal orientalism through the political familiarity promised by blackness. As an alternative, El Zein suggests attention to the material, historical, and geographic specificities of the power struggles that structure racial capitalism, classism, and racism, especially essential because of their potential international unrecognizability.

Jonathan Beller expands conversations about the role of the digital and the digital humanities through attention to the mechanisms by which the digital image is instrumental in neoliberal capitalist accumulation and colonialism. Beller argues that the digital image itself exploits the attentive labor of those who see it, organizes profitable patterns of spectatorship, and links communication directly to financial speculation. Through scrutiny of examples that attempt to disrupt the profitable, algorithmically-capitalized flow of data and attention through the interface of the screen, Beller's article makes a pointed critique of the ways that fascism manifests in and might be combated via digital economies.

Edward Chamberlain takes on the pressing need for mentorship for queer youth, in particular queer youth of color. Addressing a dearth in both studies on and commitment to the wellness and flourishing of queer youth of color in institutions of higher learning, Chamberlain turns to what is in some respects both a traditional and nontraditional archive of resources: personal narrative writing by queer people of color. Taking up both Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* and Roland Sintos Coloma's "Fragmented Entries, Multiple Selves," Chamberlain argues that the structural hybridity of these narratives serves as a formal model for a queer mentoring methodology, and delves into the texts themselves for examples of how to mentor queer youth of color in and beyond the academy. Chamberlain's intervention is at the same time vitally theoretical and practical; such sources may be nontraditional to institutions of higher learning, but are often circulated informally for the precise purposes Chamberlain describes.

Finally, this issue finds *Lateral* on the cusp of a number of new initiatives. Due to expanding content and demand, this is the first issue of a new biannual publishing schedule. Readers can expect at least a Spring and a Fall issue forthwith. Be on the lookout for our upcoming special issue "Leveraging Justice," edited by Janelle Reinelt and María Estrada-Fuentes later this year. More information on this issue is available at http://csalateral.org/wp/upcoming/leveraging-justice. The editors continue to welcome proposals for future special issues.

As part of this moment of growth, in reflection of both reader interest and the desire to mark the excellent scholarship unfolding across the field of cultural studies, *Lateral* is also adding a book review section. We are currently searching for a book review editor who will, in collaboration with the editors, play a significant role in shaping future directions in the field through their curation and editing of reviews of relevant books. Please see the call for book review editor at http://csalateral.org/wp/contribute/book-review-editor.

Notes

1. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies," in Cultural Studies eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 278, emphasis in original.
2. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 28.

3. See, for instance, recent critiques of anti-materialist turns in post-colonial studies. Amongst other failures of this turn, Neil Lazarus lists, "hostility towards totality and systematic analysis; aversion to dialectics; critique of realism and adoption instead of epistemological conventionalism or constructivism; anti-foundationalism; anti-humanism; refusal of struggle-based models of politics in favour of models that privilege 'difference', 'ambivalence', 'complexity', and 'complicity'; {and a} repudiation of Marxism, usually taking the form not of a cold war anti-Marxism but of an avant-gardist 'post-Marxism'." Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 186. Similarly, recent interdisciplinary work critiques the turn to the posthuman, the post-structural, and the post-disciplinary as a move away from understanding the racializing structures of liberal humanism and the humanities under modernity. See, Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014). Weheliye locates this very critique within Black Studies, describing it on page three as a "(non)disciplinary formation." It is exactly this kind of pointed intervention in disciplinarity that should serve as a model for cultural studies, as opposed to one meant to obscure and defend disciplinary complicity in racial capitalism. On the racializing formations intrinsic to liberal humanism, as well as a model of engaged interdisciplinarity, see Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). ↩

Bio



Stefanie A Jones

SAJ is a McNair scholar, an organizer, and an educator, and received their doctorate from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. SAJ has published in edited collections and *Theatre Journal* and has taught at Brooklyn College, Hunter College, the College of Staten Island, Marymount Manhattan College, and New York University. SAJ's research explores war, white supremacy, twenty-first century capitalist economies, and the connections between class formation and political practice.

Bio Twitter



Eero Laine

Eero Laine is an Assistant Professor at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York.

Bio Twitter



Chris Alen Sula

Chris Alen Sula is Associate Professor and Coordinator of Digital Humanities and Data Analytics & Visualization at Pratt Institute's School of

Information. He teaches graduate courses in digital humanities, information visualization, critical theory, and community building and engagement. His research applies visualization and network science to humanities datasets, especially those chronicling the history of philosophy. He has also published articles on citation studies in the humanities; the connection between digital humanities, libraries, and cultural heritage institutions; the politics of technology; and ethical and activist uses of visualization.


This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Lateral
JOURNAL OF THE CULTURAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Anne Donlon, ""A Black Man Replies": Claude McKay's Challenge to the British Left," *Lateral 5.1* (2016).

https://doi.org/10.25158/L5.1.2

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 5.1 (Spring 2016)

"A Black Man Replies": Claude McKay's Challenge to the British Left

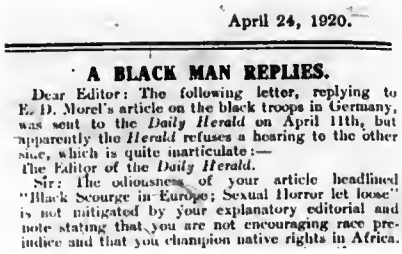
Anne Donlon

ABSTRACT Anne Donlon delves into the history of the British Left after World War I to assert the significance of the Black and feminist interventions of Claude McKay and Sylvia Pankhurst. Donlon centers the publication of "A Black Man Replies," McKay's letter to the editor published in Pankhurst's newspaper The Worker's Dreadnought, against white supremacist logics mobilized by prominent 1920s leftists that contributed to the reestablishment of policing of and violence against black men. Donlon's archival discoveries weave together biography, material cultural analysis, and histories of trans-Atlantic activism, and, in the process, reveal the labor of building radical intersectional solidarity that came before and followed the moment of "A Black Man Replies."

From at least the beginnings of the eighteenth-century abolition movement, black people in Britain urged political change locally, throughout the empire, and in the United States—a presence and intellectual contribution that is too often overlooked by historians of the British left. This public critique, pronounced from speaking podiums and in newspapers, identified intersecting oppressions of racism, sexism, and colonialism that manifested on a local and global scale. Jamaican poet Claude McKay arrived in London after the end of World War I, just a few years after the Russian Revolution, a time of political flux and fears. In the face of violent attacks on people of color—black soldiers returning to American cities, and workers arriving from the colonies to British docks—McKay staked a claim for the full humanity of black people in the pages of a weekly newspaper edited by the radical Sylvia Pankhurst. McKay's writings, facilitated by Pankhurst's institutional interventions, pushed against dangerous race-baiting of the self-identified British left and articulated an alternate political stance. In *The Workers' Dreadnought,* McKay explained the promise of nationalism for mobilizing colonized people; he discussed the symbolic role of white womanhood in perpetuating racism against blacks; and he called out the hypocrisy of white hysteria around the presence of African troops in Germany. He adamantly rejected the widely-circulating logic that color or national origin determined sexual aggression and violence, and drew attention to sexual violence against black women by colonial forces in the Caribbean. McKay articulated a set of political positions in the pages of the *Dreadnought* which he continued and transmuted in speeches and fiction throughout the decade. McKay's protest in the pages of Pankhurst's newspaper places him in a longer history of black British political engagement, denying the racist criminalization of blackness, staking a claim for the humanity of Caribbean and African migrants, and speaking back through the press to challenge and shape public opinion especially amongst the British left.

On April 24, 1920, Jamaican poet Claude McKay published a letter to the editor in Sylvia Pankhurst's London-based newspaper, *The Workers' Dreadnought*. The letter addressed the editor of a different paper, however, which McKay discussed in an accompanying note: "Dear Editor: The following letter, replying to E.D. Morel's article on the black troops in Germany, was sent to the *Daily Herald* on April 11th, but apparently the *Herald* refuses a hearing to the other side, which is quite inarticulate."[1] *The Daily Herald*, edited by George

Lansbury, had published an article by Edward Morel, "Black Scourge in Europe: Sexual Horror Let Loose by France on the Rhine."[2] As the headline suggests, Morel's sensationalist article raises the alarm that French colonial troops from Africa, stationed in Germany after World War I, present a sexual threat for European womanhood. McKay, a Jamaican writer who had recently moved to London after living in the US, wrote against Morel's racist claims about black sexuality without adhering to conservative mores or denying his sexuality. He wrote, "I, a full-blooded Negro, can control my sexual proclivities when I care to, and I am endowed with my full share of the primitive passion." He continued, "Besides, I know hundreds of negroes of the Americas and Africa who can do likewise." In the pages of *The Workers' Dreadnought*, McKay challenged the *Herald*, and, more broadly, the culture of the British Left, to reject its beliefs about the "primitive" Africans.



April 24, 1920.

A BLACK MAN REPLIES.

Dear Editor: The following letter, replying to E. D. Morel's article on the black troops in Germany, was sent to the *Daily Herald* on April 11th, but apparently the *Herald* refuses a hearing to the other side, which is quite inarticulate:—

The Editor of the *Daily Herald*.

Sir: The odiousness of your article headlined "Black Scourge in Europe; Sexual Horror let loose" is not mitigated by your explanatory editorial and note stating that you are not encouraging race prejudice and that you champion native rights in Africa.

Claude McKay, "A Black Man Replies," Workers' Dreadnought, 24 April 1920.

"Why all this obscene, maniacal outburst about the sex vitality of black men in a proletarian paper?" McKay asks of the *Herald*. McKay calls out the hypocrisy of the socialist paper and suggests that even liberal and conservative papers are more responsible in reporting colonial conflicts. "If you are really consistent in thinking that you can do something to help the white and black peoples to a better understanding of each other, there is much you might learn from Liberal and Conservative organs like *The Nation*, *The New Statesman* and the *Edinburgh Review*," McKay chides. As Robert Reinders remarked, "If this article had been written by an American racialist and had appeared in a Klan journal it might have little intrinsic historic interest. But the *Herald* was the leading left-wing daily in Britain, 'at the height of its power'; and the editor, George Lansbury, was a figure of national importance."[3] Morel's protected status in Lansbury's publication, shielded from McKay's criticism, suggests that the mainstream British Left was uninterested in making space for black men. Instead, McKay found a place in a different proletarian paper to publish his reply to Morel's vitriol. In fact, according to Barbara Winslow, *The Workers' Dreadnought* was "the only British socialist newspaper that had black correspondents."[4] McKay's publication in Sylvia Pankhurst's East London newspaper highlights the importance and singularity of the space she created on the British left for publishing dissenting opinions.

The arrival of the SS Empire Windrush to London in 1948 tends to be held as the beginning marker of black Britain, when Caribbean postwar migration began en masse and significantly changed the racial makeup of the small island nation. However, black intellectuals were participating in and protesting British culture for decades before the Windrush arrived. This expanded view of black British history is apparent in books like *Black Edwardians, Black Victorians/Black Victoriana, From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain*, and others.[5] McKay's moment at Pankhurst's newspaper comprises a lesser-known intervention in black British literature and culture. McKay used the platform of Pankhurst's leftist weekly newspaper to argue against racist beliefs about black sexuality and the mythology of white womanhood. McKay's intervention takes part in a long tradition of black writers in Britain protesting the

criminalization of blackness. (Pankhurst also finds a place in a wider history of British antiracism, as a white woman committed to fighting racism and imperialism with access to a printing press.[6])

Lansbury was an established, esteemed member of the British Left and Pankhurst was no stranger to demanding the British Left be more accountable—to women, to revolutionary, anti-Parliamentarian politics, and to people of color. This led to Pankhurst and Lansbury's complicated working relationship—though Lansbury supplied the *Dreadnought* with funds for things like paper, Pankhurst did not shy from disagreeing with him publicly. While there were times she apparently suppressed some criticism of Lansbury, in this case, she promoted McKay's protest, published under the headline "A Black Man Replies."[7]

Sylvia Pankhurst had already been writing against race prejudice prior to McKay's arrival in the pages of *The Workers' Dreadnought*. She responded to attacks on black and brown sailors that arrived at the docks nearby the paper's East London offices. In 1919, in East London as well as in other port cities in England, the Caribbean, and across the United States, race riots erupted as white people attacked men of color arriving as workers or as veterans after the first World War.[8] Just as Morel believed the Senegalese soldiers in Germany would ruin European women, white British residents in the dock areas were motivated by beliefs in the sexual threat black men posed for white women. In Pankhurst's East London neighborhood, there were multiple racially motivated attacks against men of color who arrived on the docks. One *Dreadnought* article from June 1919, "Stabbing Negroes in the London Dock Area," countered that sailors of color were victims of colonialism and capitalism, exploited to fight wars and work on behalf of white capitalists.[9] Therefore, the *Dreadnought* argued, white working class men should forge solidarity with, rather than violently attack, the sailors. Pankhurst's paper puts forth an editorial position that consistently argues for the inclusion of people of color in the category of worker, oppressed by colonial and capitalist systems.

Circuits of transatlantic radical publications brought McKay into the orbit of Pankhurst's newspaper. Pankhurst published McKay's poem "If We Must Die," on September 6th, 1919 before McKay even arrived in England. The poem, which is almost certainly his most famous poem, is a response to the race riots which set off as black soldiers returned to US cities. The introduction in the Dreadnought declared, "We take from the NY Liberator . . . these poems by Claude McKay."[10] The headline advertised the author's race: "A Negro Poet." McKay's poem must have resonated with Pankhurst's local experience of the race riots in East London. When East London and Chicago erupted in race riots, McKay and Pankhurst each took a public stand against the racist violence.

McKay lived in England from 1919 to 1920. McKay had grown up in Jamaica, and spent several years in the United States, most recently in New York, where he worked at Max and Crystal Eastman's radical newspaper *The Liberator*. The Grays, American siblings with aspirations of founding a utopian society, sponsored his trip from New York to England.[11] Arriving with letters of introduction for George Bernard Shaw and C.K. Ogden, and joining the communities of the International Club and a club for colored soldiers, McKay entered London's literary, socialist, and diasporic worlds.[12]

McKay had grown up in Jamaica at a time when British reformers and socialists were taking refuge there.[13] Walter Jekyll, a white British transplant to Jamaica, mentored him and encouraged him to write poetry that incorporated Jamaican dialect, which McKay did in his first book of poems, *Songs of Jamaica*.[14] McKay also met Sydney Olivier, the socialist Jamaican governor at the turn of the twentieth century, through Jekyll.[15] These older British men, involved with socialism and reform movements in England, were of the

same generation and intellectual community as Pankhurst's parents, who were involved in socialist politics in Manchester during her youth. McKay and Pankhurst shared an intellectual background, not only through imperial literature and history curricula, but also in their political influences. Joshua Gosciak's work on McKay's queer and political relationships with these British men in Jamaica and England suggests an important intellectual through-line that also connects McKay and Pankhurst, and the British suffrage and socialist politics for which she stood.[16] Pankhurst and McKay were similarly influenced by nineteenth century reform movements that aimed to transform language, aesthetics, and the world.

Pankhurst had grown up in the socialist politics of Manchester, and moved to London as an art student, where she joined her mother Emmeline and sister Christabel and their militant organization the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).[17] At the outset of World War I Sylvia Pankhurst split from the WSPU, when the organization aligned itself with the state's war efforts in a bargain to get women the vote. Pankhurst, opposed to the war, and increasingly interested in class issues, founded the East London Federation for Suffragettes (ELFS). The ELFS founded the *Woman's Dreadnought*, a weekly newspaper whose name invoked the type of war ship. Within a few years, the group transformed to be the Workers' Suffrage Federation, in 1916, and after the Russian Revolution, in 1918, to the Workers' Socialist Federation. The title of the newspaper changed as well, to the *Workers' Dreadnought*, a newspaper that published international news from a revolutionary, far-left editorial standpoint. East London, where Pankhurst had lived for six years by 1920, was a diverse, working-class area, full of immigrants, with large Jewish, Irish, and Chinese populations.[18] Its docks brought sailors from around the world, including the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Pankhurst's paper embraced its location in the East End, imagining the area's socialist future. One 1919 article on peace parties in the town of Bow reported, "The people in the poor, little streets of Bow have begun by organising children's parties: some day they will organise the Soviets."[19]

Pankhurst was an outspoken figure on and fearless critic of the British left. During the year McKay was at the *Dreadnought*, Pankhurst would break with Lenin and the Communist International over whether British communism should engage in parliamentarian politics. Lenin, and the newly endorsed British Communist Party, believed they should engage with Parliament. Pankhurst did not, falling further to the Left on this question. She traveled to the Soviet Union and lobbied that the position of the official British representatives to the congress should not be adopted as the Communist line.[20] After her return, she exchanged letters with Lenin, which she published in her newspaper, arguing over the place of Parliamentary engagement in communist politics. Ironic, as Morag Schiach points out, that someone who worked so hard toward gaining the vote for women and working men would turn entirely away from parliamentary politics.[21] Pankhurst was thrown out of the party, and her newspaper, which had been an official organ of communism in Britain, lost that distinction. Even in the memoir *A Long Way from Home*, in which he distanced himself from so much of his socialist and political activities of the 1920s, McKay vouched for Pankhurst's commitment to anticolonial causes. He recalled, "she was always jabbing her hat pin into the hinds of the smug and slack labor leaders. Her weekly might have been called the Dread Wasp. And wherever imperialism got drunk and went wild among native peoples, the Pankhurst paper would be on the job."[22] Even in retrospect, at a cynical distance, McKay cannot dismiss Pankhurst's energetic commitment to anti-colonial, activist, outsider journalism.

In his articles for the *Dreadnought*, McKay lays out a political project that he grappled with throughout the decade. Ideas he published in the *Dreadnought* resurfaced in his 1922 comments to the fourth congress of the Third Communist International, and in his

fictional representations of black diasporic politics in the 1928 novel *Banjo*.[23] In his first article for the *Dreadnought*, "Socialism and the Negro," published in January 1920, McKay, a Jamaican in the metropole, a product of the empire, argues to the British Left that they ought to align themselves with anticolonial movements, just as he would again in April, in his letter to the editor. In "Socialism and the Negro," he argues that British socialists should support anti-colonial nationalist movements.[24] Noting his own interest in the Garvey movement, he wrote, "for subject peoples, at least, Nationalism is the open door to Communism." He proposes anti-colonialism, including anti-colonial nationalism, as a most important socialist effort, and criticizes the blindness of white British socialists to this strategy, commenting:

> Some English Communists have remarked to me that they have no real sympathy for the Irish and Indian movement because it is nationalistic. But, to-day, the British Empire is the greatest obstacle to International Socialism, and any of its subjugated parts succeeding in breaking away from it would be helping the cause of World Communism.[25]

Famously, McKay makes a very similar argument a couple of years later during the Communist International's congress in the Soviet Union. In 1922, his foundational speech "On the Negro Question" resulted in the Communist International's Black Nation Thesis, and a series of actions in the US South (where the Black Belt, and the site of this "nation within a nation" was to be located) through the first half of the 1930s.[26] The Communist International adopted the strategy of minority nationalism to foster communism. In his 1920 article, as in his 1922 speech, McKay identifies the US South as a potential site to target for organizing.

The *Dreadnought* had an international range and had published reports from the Easter Rising in 1916 Dublin, as well as other accounts of anti-colonial sentiment from Ireland, India, and beyond. Indeed, an article on agricultural workers in Argentina followed McKay's "Socialism and the Negro." In the same issue, two of McKay's poems appeared on a page of the *Dreadnought* following the article "The Colour Bar: A Cry from South Africa." Pankhurst's newspaper was also exceptional among left British publications for its inclusion of black writers and attention to African and African-diasporic viewpoints. So, when April arrived, and the *Daily Herald* published Morel's "Black Scourge in Europe," the *Dreadnought* was a natural venue for McKay's response, especially after Lansbury had refused to publish it. McKay already had a relationship with the *Dreadnought*, and had already challenged the British Left to be more accountable to colonial subjects in its pages.

McKay recalls in his 1937 memoir *A Long Way from Home* that he began writing for the *Workers' Dreadnought* after the publication of his letter to the editor of the *Daily Herald* —which turns out to be a misremembering, but a suggestive misremembering. In fact, McKay had been writing for the *Workers' Dreadnought* for several months prior to the letter's publication in April 1920. As Wayne Cooper and Robert Reinders report in their article on McKay's time in London, "A Black Briton Returns," "McKay's account may be somewhat awry."[27] His 1937 version of the story suggests the power of the letter to the editor as a form of entry. Awry though the account may be, the version in the memoir suggests that the letter to the editor comprises a striking gesture—an interruption, a turning point—and a compelling narrative of arrival.

A letter to the editor is a public intervention. It allows readers to enter the pages of the newspaper, voice their views, and join a conversation. The letter to the editor section affords an opportunity for readers to appear in print—a distinctly modern media phenomenon, as printing technologies became less expensive, and more common. Walter

Benjamin identified this moment as comprising a fundamental shift in the relationship of reader and writer—"it began with the space set aside for 'letters to the editor' in the daily press," he writes, until any European could find somewhere to print their thoughts.[28] "Thus," Benjamin concludes, "the distinction between author and public is about to lose its axiomatic character." This example of a black Briton writing back to the white British mainstream left offers an important addendum to Benjamin's observation. (Today, the use of social media to challenge and influence mainstream news cycles offers a parallel change —a forum like Twitter offers amplification of more diverse voices with the loss of the 'axiomatic character' of twentieth-century journalism.) With the explosion of print in the twentieth-century, those people historically excluded from the world of letters—women, colonial subjects, black and brown people—increasingly find space to dissent.

The letter to the editor also does work for the paper in which it appears, of course. At a later moment of racialized moral panic in Britain, the authors of *Policing the Crisis* analyzed letters to the editor about the 1972 Handsworth mugging case.[29] The authors of the chapter argue that the "principal function" of letters to the editors "is to help the press organize and orchestrate the debate about public questions."[30] McKay's thwarted attempt to print his letter in the *Herald* demonstrates this selection on the part of the *Herald*. As the authors of *Policing the Crisis* note, letters to the editor "are not an unstructured exchange but a *highly structured* one."[31] The *Dreadnought* constructed its own community of news sources and subscribers, hailed especially in the ads and letters of its pages. Occasionally, the news stories themselves would also invoke the networks of activists, where Pankhurst played a prominent role, placing the readers in a direct line to German Communist and founder of International Women's Day, Clara Zetkin, or Lenin, or the Finnish Communist Party, for instance. In others, the pages appealed to readers to subscribe, to share their papers and encourage others to read, to hang posters in news agencies. Directly below McKay's letter to the editor, a notice announces "In order to save expense to Comrades, both in town and country, who cannot obtain the *Dreadnought* from a neighbouring newsagent, we have decided to reduce the rates for future subscriptions."[32] Just as Benedict Anderson identified newspapers as crucial technology to create imagined community, we can see how the *Dreadnought* conjured its community of readers "in town and country."[33] And that community of readers was familiar with columns that challenged mainstream socialism.

Though overwhelmingly the paper covered the presence of African troops according to white supremacist beliefs, the *Daily Herald* did publish an exchange of letters to the editor between Morel and a man who protested Morel's claims. The letter of protest was lodged by Norman Leys, who explains he's lived "for 17 years in tropical Africa, for the last three of them in company with black troops."[34] Leys protests Morel's claims about African sexuality: "it is untrue that sexual passion is stronger in Africans than in Europeans. And it is untrue that sexual connection between an African male and European female is injurious to a European female." Leys argues that the belief that sexual passion is stronger in Africans is "one of the great sources of race hatred" and "should never be repeated by any honest man or honest newspaper."[35] Morel writes to respond a few days later, dimissing Leys' charge, stating that the question of "whether sexual passion is stronger in the African" is one "upon which it is possible to hold different views without flinging about charges of dishonesty." He concludes by flaunting his credentials, among "those who have been defending the African peoples against race exploitation and race prejudice for more years than Dr. Leyds [sic] has spent in East Africa."[36]

McKay's letter to the editor was printed for the readers of the *Dreadnought* but made its appeal much more widely. He calls for British socialists to be more accountable to victims

of empire. In his complaint to the *Daily Herald*, McKay questions the political commitments of a socialist paper that circulates such racist vitriol. He argues:

> The stopping of French exploitation and use of the North African conscripts (not mercenaries, as your well-informed correspondent insists they are) against the Germans is clearly a matter upon which the French Socialists should take united action. But not as you have done.[37]

McKay agrees that the presence of these colonial conscripts is a problem—but not for the reasons Morel puts forth. This argument resonates with a moment in McKay's novel *Banjo*, published at the end of the decade, in 1928. The protagonist, Ray, an African American living in Marseille, had saved a clipping of a letter to the editor. The letter argued that a Senegalese soldier who had committed murder had done so because he had been taken out of his native land: "Transplanté, déraciné, il est devenue un fou sanguinaire" (transplanted, deracinated, he became a bloodthirsty madman). The novel reflects, "it was such an amusing revelation of civilized logic that Ray had preserved it, especially as he was in tacit agreement with the thesis while loathing the manner of its presentation."[38]

Similarly, in McKay's remarks in the *Dreadnought*, he implicitly agrees that the presence of colonial conscripts is a problem, but totally objects to the reasoning of Morel's argument. At another point in the novel, Ray recalls that he was in Germany when the French had black troops stationed there:

> A big campaign of propaganda was on against them, backed by German-Americans, negro-breaking Southerners, and your English liberals and socialists. The odd thing about that propaganda was that it said nothing about the exploitation of primitive and ignorant black conscripts to do the dirty work of one victorious civilization over another, but it was all about the sexuality of Negroes—that strange, big bug forever buzzing in the imagination of white people.[39]

This remark, like the letter to the editor Ray carries with him, resonates with the opinions McKay put forth earlier in the decade in his own letter to the editor. McKay addressed those "English liberals and socialists" directly in the pages of the *Dreadnought*. While many of McKay's political stances shifted during the 1920s, in *Banjo*, Ray faithfully echoes McKay's own position from his time in England.

McKay reproached the *Daily Herald* for goading racist violence. He reports he's been "told in Limehouse," an East London neighborhood, "by white men, who ought to know, that this summer will see a recrudescence of the outbreaks that occurred last year"—more attacks on people of color on the docks.[40] McKay again points out the hypocrisy of the *Herald*'s position: "The negro-baiting Bourbons of the United States will thank you, and the proletarian underworld of London will certainly gloat over the scoop of the Christian-Socialist-pacifist *Daily Herald*."

In the United States, the mythology of white womanhood, and the complicity, participation, and endorsement of white women, underwrote the terror of lynching. In Europe, the same logic was applied to condemn the presence of Senegalese soldiers in the Rhine Valley, and to attack the black and Asian sailors and workers arriving at the docks. In this worldview, white women are sexually pure, without sexual agency, and the protectors of whiteness. As Vron Ware points out in *Beyond the Pale*, this logic took on special valences in the British colonial context. Ware notes that "English women were seen as the 'conduits of the essence of the race'" who "symbolized not only the guardians of the race in their reproductive capacity, but they also provided […] a guarantee that

British morals and principles were adhered to in the settler community," citing examples in India, Nigeria, and South Africa.[41] Ware notes that "the degree to which white women were protected from the fear of sexual assault was a good indication of the level of security felt by the colonial authorities."[42] Clearly, this logic of fear, protection of white women, and subordination of colonized people that informed colonial policy in the Victorian era also ruled the response to the presence of Senegalese troops in Europe in this moment of insecurity after World War I, which had resulted in the loss of life of so many soldiers, and the increased mobility and visibility of soldiers of color in Europe. Like colonial officers abroad, English culture at home rallied around the purity of white women under threat from black men, in a moment of crisis.

Notably, the white women held up in 1920 were working class, impoverished, and often prostitutes. This embrace of the white womanhood of prostitutes comprises a departure from Victorian definitions of whiteness, in which working class women were less white than middle and upper class women who remained in the private realm. Radhika Mohanram explores the ways gender, race, and class came to define whiteness in the Victorian age, particularly noting the Contagious Disease Act of the 1860s, which imprisoned white prostitutes who had contracted venereal diseases, the incidence of which increased significantly when troops returned from India after the Sepoy Rebellion.[43] Mohanram concludes, "whiteness was not just about racial differences, but also about the covering over of class differences in the threat of black violence"—an observation that applies even more so to this moment in 1920, when the class and occupation of the women is much less a concern than their race.[44]

McKay calls out imperial constructions of white womanhood and black sexual aggression, inserting himself into a long history of such protest. Ida B. Wells got run out of the US South at the end of the nineteenth-century when she argued that white women could be engaged in consensual sexual relationships with black men.[45] McKay makes a related argument, introducing the possibility that black men have control over their sexual behavior, and are not exceptionally prone to violence or disease. Not only can white women choose and consent to have sex with a black man, but a black man can choose appropriate sexual encounters. Morel spread his message that "you cannot quarter these men upon a European countryside, without their women folk, without subjecting thousands of European women to willing, or unwilling, sexual intercourse with them," but Pankhurst and McKay refused the rhetoric.[46] Revealingly—"willing, or unwilling"—any kind of sexual act between a white woman and black man is equally chilling to Morel. McKay challenged this in an even more straightforward statement in 1922. He wrote in *Negroes in America* that women have a "duty […] to overturn the malicious assertion that their relations with colored comrades must necessarily be immoral and to show that this is a vile lie and slander."[47]

When the *Daily Herald* published Morel's article, they called on women to act, but not in the way McKay urges. The *Herald* ran an announcement stating "We hope all our readers, but especially our women readers, will give close attention to the article by E.D. Morel which we print to-day on another page."[48] Morel's argument pivoted on white womanhood under siege, and he courted the support of white women's organizations. One section of his article was titled "Outrage on Womanhood," in which he spells out the links between women as bearers of whiteness and empire: "The French militarists are perpetrating an abominable outrage upon womanhood, upon the white race, and upon civilization."[49] In Morel's letter to the editor of April 21, he urges that European women should organize to protest the presence of black troops. Morel argues in his letter that "to drag tens of thousands of primitive Africans, among whom the sexual impulse is of necessity strongly developed, from their homes in West Africa, and to quarter them,

without their women folk […] to do this is to subject thousands of white women to sexual intercourse with these men." Morel states this is "a monstrous outrage upon both races against which the women of Europe should protest on behalf of European womanhood." And, indeed, women did take up this charge.

A few days after Morel's article, the *Daily Herald* reported on the several resolutions passed by organizations to protect white women, under the title "Black Troops Terror."[50] The Central Committee of the Women's Co-operative Guild had passed a resolution urging the British government to influence France to withdraw the Senegalese troops. The Hereford and District Trades and Labour Council lodged their protest "on the ground of morality, the safe-guarding of white women, and the purity of Europeans from the black strain." In Wales, the Merthyr Independent Labour Party and Merthyr Peace Council planned a national campaign, the *Herald* reports, in response to Morel's article. Morel's widely reprinted pamphlet *Horror on the Rhine* included an endorsement by Frau Rohl, Socialist Minister of the Reichstag: "We appeal to the women of the world to support us in our protest against the utterly unnatural occupation by coloured troops of German districts along the Rhine."[51] After hearing Morel speak, the Women's International League passed a resolution affirming, "in the interests of good feeling between all the races of the world and the security of all women to prohibit the importation into Europe for warlike purposes of troops belonging to primitive peoples."[52] White women in Europe became political agents in response to this perceived threat.

This mobilization of women's groups stands in contrast to what took place at the *Dreadnought*. Sylvia Pankhurst's anti-racist feminist project and McKay's conception of white women's potential role in fighting racism, articulated in an earlier article for the *Dreadnought*, refuses the foundational belief that white women need to be protected from black men. Pankhurst was not invested in holding up the mythology of white womanhood, with its valences of sexual purity and powerlessness. Like McKay, who had relationships with men, she didn't subscribe to the sexual mores of her time, and would a few years later proudly have a child with Italian anarchist Silvio Corio without being married. The 1919 *Dreadnought* article "Stabbing Negroes in the London Dock Area" took aim at paranoia around white women's sexuality:

> Are you afraid that a white woman would prefer a black man to you if you met her on equal terms with him? Do you not think you would be better employed in getting conditions made right for yourself and your fellow workers than in stabbing a black man who would probably prefer to bring a black wife over with him if he could afford to do so; and would probably have stayed in Africa if the capitalists had left him and his country alone?[53]

The line of argument is not as affirming as McKay's defense of black agency, as it relies on floating the less threatening possibility—probability—that black men would not be interested in white women or being in Europe. Nonetheless, the argument dismisses white women as a pinnacle or ideal, and mocks white anxieties around interracial relations. Pankhurst dispenses with what Hazel Carby later termed "white women […] as the prize objects of the western world."[54]

Black women are absent from much of the debate around the presence of African troops in Germany. The alarmist faction that believed the African troops posed a violent, sexual threat occasionally invoked the absence of "their women folk" as reason that the "primitive Africans" were preying on white women.[55] In general, the moral panic around African men in Europe neglected to consider black women as agents; rather, they were spectral figures, whose absence enabled the "sexual horror." The role of black women in this account is entirely passive, simply a population far removed that serves to absorb the

sexual activity of black men. As Carby argued in "White Woman Listen!" later in the twentieth century, white feminism failed to account for the experiences of black and brown women under racism and imperialism.[56] In contrast, in his letter, McKay highlighted colonial histories in which white soldiers in the West Indies raped black women.

McKay invoked European colonial history to challenge assumptions about the moral superiority of white civilization. In fact, in his letter to the editor, McKay dismisses the premise that an entire race could be deemed "degenerate." McKay takes aim at the logic of white supremacy, writing, rather provocatively, "During my stay in Europe, I have come in contact with many weak and lascivious persons of both sexes, but I do not argue from my experience that the English race is degenerate." His comments incorporate rhetoric of disease and dirtiness ("I have known some of the finest and cleanest types of men and women among the Anglo-Saxon"), while dispensing with the racialization of these categories. He also rebukes Morel's accusation that the soldiers are spreading syphilis with a counterargument he ascribes to competent medical experts: "where [syphilis] is known among blacks it has been carried thither by the whites."

McKay had earlier considered how to use the logic of white superiority against itself. In his earlier article "Socialism and the Negro," McKay argued that white women might be uniquely positioned to fight black oppression because of their special status under white supremacy. In a move that follows Ida B. Wells and anticipates Hazel Carby, McKay identifies the centrality of the myth of white womanhood in anti-black racism. McKay suggests that those opposed to black oppression should manipulate the valorization of white womanhood by sending white women to organize in the U.S. South:

> Coloured men from the North cannot be sent into the South for propaganda purposes, for they will be lynched. White men from the North will be beaten and, if they don't leave, they will also be lynched. A like fate awaits coloured women. But the South is boastful of its spirit of chivalry. It believes that it is the divinely-appointed guardian of sacred white womanhood, and it professes to disfranchise, outrage and lynch Negro men and women solely for the protection of white women.
>
> It seems then that the only solution to the problem is to get white women to carry the message of socialism to both white and black workers.[57]

McKay argues that white women can have a particular role in challenging Southern racism. He proposes women as political agents, and, like the militant suffrage movement that Pankhurst took part in, conceives of ways that patriarchal expectations for lovely and refined white women can be used for political gain. He makes this claim while working at a socialist newspaper run by a white woman in East London. Pankhurst's presence in East London, as editor of a radical newspaper that opposed racism and exploitation, suggests a historical role of white women, other than as symbols of or defenders of white womanhood.

McKay publishing to protest the mythology of white womanhood in Pankhurst's newspaper has significant historical precursors. The pages of woman-edited British newspapers had previously published similar protests from black writers from the Americas. For instance, Catherine Impey's *Anti-Caste* received support from Frederick Douglass, who in 1888 sent five dollars in support of her work and told her, "I think, however, that you are more needed in America than in England."[58] The publication declared that *Anti-Caste* "claims for the darker members of the Human Family everywhere a full and equal share of Protection, Freedom, Equality of Opportunity, and

Human Fellowship."[59] When Ida B. Wells came to England, her speaking tour was promoted and documented in the pages of *Anti-Caste*, and *Fraternity*, a publication that split from *Anti-Caste* edited by Celestine Edwards. They published Well's anti-lynching pamphlet "American Atrocities." An August 1894 article from *Fraternity* reported, "if the women of the South were all 'pure in heart and sound in head' we should hear of fewer lynchings."[60] These publications, with links to the Quakers and the British abolitionist movement, organized women to advocate on behalf of racial justice, at the same time that Wells pushed them to acknowledge and address the role of white women in perpetuating racial inequality.[61]

McKay's time at the *Dreadnought* came to an abrupt end in October 1920, when Pankhurst was arrested, tried, and served a sentence at Holloway Prison for violating the Defence of Realm Act. The *Dreadnought* had published "Discontent on the Lower Deck," an article written by an anonymous British sailor, identified as S. 000 (Gunner), H.M.S. Hunter, that expressed his frustration with the navy. The sailor was a devoted reader of the paper, and McKay had previously arranged copies for distribution on the sailor's ship.[62] In "Discontent on the Lower Deck," the sailor advocated a class-based, anti-war stance: "Stand by your class. Men of the lower deck: Are you going to see your class go under in the fight with the capitalist brutes who made millions out of your sacrifices during the war?"[63] Soon after the article was published, the London police raided the *Dreadnought's* office, and prosecuted Pankhurst under the Defence of Realm Act.

McKay narrates the police raid in *A Long Way from Home*. As the office was raided, he smuggled a draft of the incriminating article out of the office, and flushed it down the toilet. (I have always read this reported act in tandem with the drafts of poems Pankhurst wrote on toilet paper while she was imprisoned, which now have a home in an acid free archival box in the British Museum, as examples of diverging fates of the material culture of activism and protest.) McKay, according to his account in the memoir, eluded the attention of the police by playing against their prejudice:

> "And what are you?" the detective asked.
>
> "Nothing, Sir," I said, with a big black grin. Chuckling, he let me pass. (I learned afterward that he was the ace of Scotland Yard.) I walked out of that building and into another, and entering a water closet I tore up the original article, dropped it in, and pulled the chain.[64]

McKay strategically effaces his selfhood in the moment, in order to escape scrutiny from the police, dispose of the incriminating article, and save the author from punishment. However, McKay was even more central than he let on in his memoir. A report from November 6, 1920 recorded the charges:

> The formal charge against Miss Pankhurst was that she did an act calculated and likely to cause sedition amongst His Majesty's Forces, in the Navy, and among the civilian population, by publishing and causing and procuring to be published in the City of London, a newspaper called the *Workers' Dreadnought*, organ of the Communist Party, dated October 16th, 1920, containing articles called "Discontent on the Lower Deck," "How to get a Labour Government," "The Datum Line," and "The Yellow Peril and the Dockers," contrary to Regulation 42 of the Defence of the Realm Regulations.[65]

"The Yellow Peril and the Dockers" was written by Leon Lopes. McKay's biographer Wayne Cooper notes "Leon Lopes" was very likely one of McKay's pseudonyms.[66] "Yellow Peril," like McKay's letter to the editor, objects to white men's physical and verbal attacks on workers of color for their sexual relationships with white women. Like McKay's letter

to the editor and previous coverage of racial attacks perpetrated by white dockworkers, "Yellow Peril" urged white working people to see a common cause with "aliens," "Jews," and "Asiatic" workers: "The dockers, instead of being unduly concerned about the presence of their coloured fellow men, who, like themselves, are the victims of Capitalism and Civilization, should turn their attention to the huge stores of wealth along the water front."[67] As Barbara Winslow's article on Pankhurst suggests, Pankhurst's testimony during the trial strongly suggests McKay was the author: "Leon Lopez, being a coloured man—who is not a British subject perhaps—felt this keenly, and he put his letter in this paper; and I, as editor, felt he had a right to put it there and point out to the workers that unemployment is caused by deeper things than this."[68]

In her testimony at the appeal, Pankhurst argued that "Yellow Peril on the Docks" and "Discontent on the Lower Decks" were not advocating looting or senseless violence, but rather were part of a scientific, rational attempt to transform society.[69] Pankhurst cited what she called "standard books" that advocated a message similar to the allegedly incriminating articles, in order to show that if such books were collected in libraries without controversy and were not the object of criminal investigations then neither should her paper be. She juxtaposes her discussion of these *Dreadnought* articles with writing by William Morris, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and other authors and thinkers who methodically challenged the present society. Pankhurst's approach was not legally sophisticated (as she and others noted during her own defense), but it was literary. She compiled quotations from other articles in the paper and other books in conventional libraries to show the ideas her newspaper put forth were accepted in other contexts. The newspaper posed a more urgent threat, apparently, in the eyes of the law.

The paper continued to publish during Pankhurst's imprisonment, and for several years afterward. The *Dreadnought* published the full text of Pankhurst's appeal in a special issue, and after the issue sold out, in pamphlet form. After Pankhurst was released, she turned her attentions to publishing a literary magazine, which eventually came out in two issues, in 1923 and 1924. *Germinal*, like the *Dreadnought*, published writers from all over the world, including India and South Africa, and took on an explicitly internationalist, anticolonial, and antiracist editorial position. In the 1930s, until the end of her life, Pankhurst turned her energy to Ethiopian anti-fascism and self-determination. Pankhurst founded another weekly newspaper, *New Times and Ethiopia News*, which connected antifascist organizing across Europe and Africa. She dedicated herself to independence in Ethiopia and Eritrea during and after World War II. Eventually, Pankhurst moved to Addis Ababa, where she was buried in 1960.[70]

Pankhurst was an outstanding figure but not alone among twentieth-century white British women in her participation in antiracist campaigns. In one key moment in the 1930s in Scottsboro, Alabama, nine young men were falsely accused of raping two white women; Ada Wright, mother of two of those accused, traveled to England to raise awareness of the miscarriage of justice happening in Alabama. The international organizing on behalf of Scottsboro engaged white British women like Naomi Mitchison, Vera Brittain, Nancy Cunard, and Lady Kathleen Simon. Cunard published a number of pieces related to Scottsboro in her 1934 anthology *Negro,* including her own essay "Scottsboro and Other Scottsboros."[71] She also organized a petition and letter writing campaign in Britain that garnered responses from writers including Storm Jameson, Rebecca West, and Hope Mirrlees.[72] Even Virginia Woolf, who is not particularly known for her involvement in black diasporic politics, signed a public letter in support of the Scottsboro boys.[73] These women worked alongside black British activists, including Jomo Kenyatta (then Johnstone Kenyatta), who served as a joint secretary of the Scottsboro Defence Committee, as well as members of the West African Students' Union, the Negro

Welfare Association, and the International Labour Defence London Coloured Committee. The moment of McKay working at Pankhurst's newspaper in 1920 constitutes an early twentieth-century example of white British women confronting the violent implications of white womanhood.

London, it turned out, was not the place for McKay. McKay's biographer Wayne Cooper and Robert Reinders's article on McKay's time in England reports that McKay left London shortly after Pankhurst's imprisonment, feeling that the policing in Europe was getting out of hand.[74] But perhaps the anxiety was even more personal. The central role of his article in the trial that put Pankhurst in prison may explain more specifically McKay's anxiety around the police in London, and perhaps also his aversion to publicly claiming Pankhurst more seriously later on (dismissing her movement as "more piquant than serious").[75] Her trial and appeal, and the role of McKay's reporting in the trial, reveals the perceived threat of the cross-fertilization of antiracism and socialism, as circulated in the pages of the newspaper.

McKay went on to the United States, the Soviet Union, Germany, France, and Morocco, later in the decade. He continued to be occupied with the issue that motivated his letter to the editor in the *Dreadnought*. In 1922, he exchanged letters with Trotsky about the question of black troops in Europe that were "printed in Pravda, Izvestia, and other Moscow newspapers," and which he included in *The Negroes in America*, a book first published in Russian translation.[76] McKay highlights the importance of radical newspapers in London, describing a club to which he belonged, comprised of soldiers of color from Africa and the Americas. "I was working at that time in London in a communist group. Our group provided the club of Negro soldiers with revolutionary newspapers and literature, which had nothing in common with the daily papers that are steeped in race prejudice."[77] The *Dreadnought* offered alternative news for people of color in London, a city that McKay identifies, along with New York, as one of the "chief cultural centers of the West where Negroes hold mass meetings and discuss questions which interest them."[78] London would continue to be a cultural center for the African diaspora, with intellectuals including C.L.R. James, George Padmore, Una Marson, and Claudia Jones participating in newspaper projects that offered an alternative to dailies "steeped in race prejudice" in the coming decades.

Critics associate McKay with docklands—transnational, liminal spaces from which to articulate black diasporic views of the world, as he did in *Banjo*.[79] His journalism from the docks of East London tends to be set aside (no doubt in part because he later disavowed organized socialist politics, and because Sylvia Pankhurst's post-suffrage movement remains relatively unexamined). Nonetheless, McKay's writings in the pages of the *Dreadnought* illuminate his strategies to refute racist beliefs about black sexuality and white womanhood. The pages of the *Dreadnought* provided a sympathetic platform to call out British labor leaders on their racism, and to offer black readers alternative analysis. He calls for those who claim to represent workers to be accountable to colonized people of color. McKay's reply in the pages of the *Dreadnought* initiates an incisive protest, an instance of the empire writing back.

Acknowledgements

This article grew out of conversations with the late Jane Marcus. Funding from a Mellon Institute for Historical Research Pre-Dissertation Fellowship and a Graduate Center Doctoral Student Research award contributed to the work presented here. I also wish to acknowledge the peer reviewers whose feedback helped my revision, and editors Stefanie A. Jones, Eero Laine, and Chris Alen Sula.

Notes

1. Claude McKay, "A Black Man Replies," *The Workers' Dreadnought*, April 24, 1920.
2. E.D. Morel, ""Black Scourge in Europe: Sexual Horror Let Loose by France on the Rhine," *Daily Herald*, April 10, 1920.
3. Robert C. Reinders, "Racialism on the Left E.D. Morel and the 'Black Horror on the Rhine,'" *International Review of Social History* 13, no. 1 (April 1968): 1, doi:10.1017/S0020859000000419.
4. Barbara Winslow, *Sylvia Pankhurst: Sexual Politics And Political Activism,* 1st ed., (London: Routledge, 1996), 128.
5. Jeffrey P. Green, *Black Edwardians: Black People in Britain, 1901-1914* (London: Franck Cass, 1998); Gretchen Gerzina, *Black Victorians/Black Victoriana* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003); Susan D. Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); Gail Ching-Liang Low and Marion Wynne-Davies, *A Black British Canon?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
6. Vron Ware, in *Beyond the Pale*, notes that attention to white women who fought racism has been underdeveloped: "Whereas feminist historians have uncovered many examples of feminists who braved convention at home to fight to improve the lives and opportunities of women {…}, there has been little corresponding interest in British women who came face to face with the complexities of racism and male power." Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History* (New York: Verso, 1992), 42. While this is less true today than when Ware first wrote this in 1992 (questions of women's relationships to race and empire have informed recent scholarship in British modernism, for instance), this topic remains under-examined.
7. Pankhurst apparently suppressed McKay's scoop that a sawmill that George Lansbury "owned or partially owned" was using scabs during a strike. Claude McKay, *A Long Way from Home* (New York: Arno Press & the New York Times. 1973), 78. Despite the importance of the story, and despite the *Dreadnought*'s general antagonism toward Lansbury's *Daily Herald* and what it represented as the vehicle for mainstream British socialism, Pankhurst squashes the story. McKay surmises Pankhurst did so out of a personal allegiance to Lansbury, or because she owed some money to him. Later, when she criticizes McKay for a flattering profile of a leader of a union instead of interviewing rank-and-file members, he reflects on page 81 of *A Long Way from Home*, "I resented the criticism, especially as Pankhurst had suppressed my article on Lansbury."
8. Jacqueline Jenkinson, *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2009); Barbara Foley, *Spectres of 1919: Class and Nation in the Making of the New Negro* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003).
9. "Stabbing Negroes in the London Dock Area," *Workers' Dreadnought*, June 7, 1919, 1354.
10. "A Negro Poet," *Workers' Dreadnought*, September 6, 1919.
11. McKay, *A Long Way from Home*, 42.
12. Josh Gosciak, *The Shadowed Country: Claude McKay and the Romance of the Victorians*, illustrated edition (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006). Gosciak also documents other links that McKay had to Britain. McKay had connections with Britain through his mentor in Jamaica, Jekyll, and Jekyll's sister

Gertrude, who facilitated the reviews of *Songs of Jamaica* (which included rich descriptions of nature, botanica, and landscape) in gardening magazines. Also, when McKay arrived in England, he contacted C.K. Ogden, with a letter of introduction from Walter Fuller. Ogden, in Cambridge, eventually published McKay's volume of poetry with an introduction by I. A. Richards. This convergence of 19th century reformers, gay men, with McKay's socialism and anti colonialism, points to another unexpected simultaneity that happens when one traces interpersonal connections.

13. Ibid., 53.
14. Ibid., 55.
15. Ibid., 43–44.
16. Gosciak summarizes these influences on page 1: "some of the dominant discourses in the late Victorian and early modern periods, such as internationalism, pacifism, the Arts and Crafts movement, decadence, Fabian socialism, and sexual rebellion." These shared aesthetic influences may also help contextualize the traditional literary forms both Pankhurst and McKay each employed in their poetry.
17. Winslow, *Sylvia Pankhurst*; Richard Pankhurst and E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *Sylvia Pankhurst, Artist and Crusader: An Intimate Portrait* (New York: Paddington Press, 1979).
18. John Marriott, *Beyond the Tower: A History of East London* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011); Chaim Bermant, *London's East End: Point of Arrival* (London: Macmillan, 1976).
19. "The Parties in the Streets," *Workers' Dreadnought*, August, 16, 1919, 1438.
20. E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *Soviet Russia as I Saw It* (London: "Workers' Dreadnought" Publishers, 1921).
21. Morag Shiach, *Modernism, Labour, and Selfhood in British Literature and Culture, 1890-1930* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 102.
22. McKay, *A Long Way from Home*, 77.
23. *Workers' Dreadnought*, January 31, 1920.
24. Claude McKay, "Socialism and the Negro," *Workers' Dreadnought*, January 31, 1920, 1621.
25. Ibid.
26. Claude McKay, "'Report On The Negro Question' Speech To The Fourth Congress Of The Third Communist International, Moscow" in "McKay Essays on Race in the U.S.," Modern American Poetry, accessed May 2, 2016, http://www.english.illinois.edu/Maps/poets/m_r/mckay/essays.htm; Robin D. G Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).
27. Wayne F. Cooper and Robert Reinders, "A Black Briton Comes 'Home': Claude McKay in England, 1920," *Race* 9, no. 1 (1967): 72; Wayne F. Cooper, *Claude McKay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance: A Biography* (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 1996), 114.
28. Walter Benjamin, Howard Eiland, and Michael William Jennings, *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings Volume 4* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 262.
29. Stuart Hall, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London: Macmillan, 1978), 120.
30. Ibid., 120.
31. Ibid., 121.
32. *Workers' Dreadnought*, April 24, 1920.
33. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, New Edition (New York: Verso, 2006).

34. Norman Leys, "A Contradiction?" *Daily Herald*, 17 April 1920, 4.
35. Ibid.
36. E.D. Morel, "Black Troops," *Daily Herald*, April 21, 1920.
37. McKay, "A Black Man Replies."
38. Claude McKay, *Banjo, a Story without a Plot*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 277.
39. Ibid., 146.
40. McKay, "A Black Man Replies."
41. Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, 37–38.
42. Ibid., 38.
43. Radhika Mohanram, *Imperial White: Race, Diaspora, and the British Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 36, http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=328378.
44. Ibid., 44.
45. Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 53.
46. Morel, "Black Scourge in Europe."
47. Claude McKay and A. L McLeod, *The Negroes in America* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1979), 77.
48. No author, "A New Horror," *Daily Herald*, April 10, 1920, 4.
49. Morel, "Black Scourge in Europe."
50. No author, "Black Troops Terror," *Daily Herald*, April 16, 1920. Other coverage of this issue during this period in the *Herald* included "France's Black Troops: Govt Shirks Issue," April 15, 1920; "Black Soldiers 'Withdrawn' But Are Still There," April 15, 1920. "A Semi-Ultimatum to France: British Ambassador Withdrawn from Allied Conference," April 12 1920; "Black Peril on Rhine," April 12, 1920.
51. Edward Morel, *Coloured Troops in Europe: Report of Meeting Held in the Central Hall, Westminster, on April 27th, 1920* (London: Women's International League, 1920).
52. Ibid.
53. "Stabbing Negroes in the London Dock Area," *Workers' Dreadnought*, June 7, 1919, 1354.
54. Hazel Carby, "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood" in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, eds. Houston A. Baker Jr and Manthia Diawara (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
55. Morel, "Black Scourge in Europe."
56. Carby, "White Woman Listen!"
57. McKay, "Socialism and the Negro."
58. Letter from Frederick Douglass to Catherine Impey, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, Oxford University. MSS Brit Emp S20.
59. *Anti-Caste*, John Rylands Library, Manchester University, Box 11, folder 23.
60. *Fraternity*, August 1894, 4.
61. Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 1992). Ferguson discusses the ties between Quaker women and abolition, rhetoric of women's rights and its reliance on slavery discourse.
62. McKay, *A Long Way from Home*.

63. S. 000 (Gunner), H.M.S. Hunter, "Discontent on the Lower Deck," *Workers' Dreadnought*, October 16 1920, 1.
64. McKay, *A Long Way from Home*, 83.
65. "A Communist on Trial," *Workers' Dreadnought*, November 6, 1920, 1.
66. Cooper, *Claude McKay,* 123.
67. Leon Lopez, "The Yellow Peril and the Dockers," *Workers' Dreadnought*, October 16, 1920, 5.
68. Quoted in Barbara Winslow, "The First White Rastafarian," in Robin Hackett, Freda Hauser, and Gay Wachman, *At Home and Abroad in the Empire: British Women Write the 1930s* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 177.
69. E. Sylvia Pankhurst, "Appeal of Miss Sylvia Pankhurst against Sentence of Six Months Imprisonment {...} for Articles in the Workers' Dreadnought." Estelle Sylvia Pankhurst Papers, Folder 254, International Institute for Social History.
70. Winslow, *Sylvia Pankhurst*.
71. Nancy Cunard, *Negro Anthology* (London: Published by Nancy Cunard at Wishart & Co, 1934), 243–268. A few years earlier, Cunard had publicly denounced her mother's—and by extension British—racism in a pamphlet: Nancy Cunard, *Black Man and White Ladyship. An Anniversary* (Privately printed: Toulon, 1931, n.d., 11).
72. Cunard, "Scottsboro Appeal and Petition with Signatures, 1933," n.d. Box 28, folder 6. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.
73. "Scottsboro Case," *The Week-end Review*, October 6, 1932, and clipped in Lady Simon's papers at Oxford's Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, Oxford University.
74. Cooper and Reinders, "A Black Briton Comes 'Home.'"
75. McKay, *A Long Way from Home*, 77.
76. McKay and McLeod, *The Negroes in America*, 9.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid., 8.
79. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 13. Gilroy, on page 13 of the *Black Atlantic*: "The involvement of Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, Claude McKay, and Langston Hughes with ships and sailors lends additional support to Linebaugh's prescient suggestion that 'the ship remained perhaps the most important conduit of Pan-African communication before the appearance of the long-playing record.'"

Bio



Anne Donlon

Anne Donlon is a CLIR Postdoctoral Fellow at Emory University's Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives & Rare Book Library and the Emory Center for Digital Scholarship. Her edition of previously unpublished correspondence and poems, *Langston Hughes, Nancy Cunard, and Louise Thompson: Poetry, Politics, and Friendship in the Spanish Civil War* (2012), was published in the Lost & Found CUNY Poetics Documents series. She received her PhD in English from the Graduate Center, CUNY. Her dissertation laid the groundwork for her current book project, *Dear Folks at Home: African*

American Women Organizers, Writing, and the Spanish Civil War, as well as this article for *Lateral*. Her work has also appeared in the *Massachusetts Review* and *Modernism/modernity*.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-40S3

Lateral
JOURNAL OF THE CULTURAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Rayya El Zein, "From 'Hip Hop Revolutionaries' to 'Terrorist-Thugs': 'Blackwashing' between the Arab Spring and the War on Terror," *Lateral 5.1* (2016).

https://doi.org/10.25158/L5.1.3

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 5.1 (Spring 2016)

From 'Hip Hop Revolutionaries' to 'Terrorist-Thugs': 'Blackwashing' between the Arab Spring and the War on Terror

Rayya El Zein

ABSTRACT Rayya El Zein takes up a global analysis of how ideas of blackness, whiteness, and Arabness circulate in post-9/11 media accounts and argues that these concepts work to mediate Western understanding of politics in the Arab world. El Zein unpacks the paradox by which blackwashing is differentially deployed to mark certain Arab subjects as a "good rapper" or a "bad rapper," and how both of these valences serve to expand neoliberal orientalism through the political familiarity promised by blackness. As an alternative, El Zein suggests attention to the material, historical, and geographic specificities of the power struggles that structure racial capitalism, classism, and racism, especially and essential because of their potential international unrecognizability.

Trailer of the film *Slingshot Hip Hop* (dir. Jackie Salloum, 2008)

The opening shot in the trailer of Jackie Salloum's documentary *Slingshot Hip Hop* invites the viewer to identify with its Palestinian protagonists by aligning them with a specific iteration of urban life and political expression. The trailer begins with an interview with Tamer Nafar, of the Palestinian rap group DAM. Nafar holds Public Enemy's 1990 album *Fear of a Black Planet* and he says, "Look how great this title is: *Fear of a Black Planet*. It's about how the white man is trying to stop the growth of the Black population. In this country, there's fear of an Arabic Nation." The trailer thus introduces the film's protagonists through a specific racial triangulation. It invites the viewer to understand the experiences of Palestinians under Occupation through the iconic lens of the expression of the struggle of black Americans in a white US. Translating Palestinian frustration under Zionist Occupation in this way encourages the viewer to make a set of associations about

Palestinian oppression, struggle, and tactics. In this essay, I interrogate the racial representations through which Arab rappers are constructed and circulated in different forms of English language media and the political implications of these representations. In doing so, I attempt to draw into focus the window which often frames Arab protagonists for an audience outside the Arab world.

Slingshot Hip Hop is a documentary film about Palestinians making and performing rap music under the Israeli Occupation. It follows different rap crews from the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and inside Israel as they attempt to and are obstructed from taking the stage in one concert in the occupied West Bank. The film was released in 2008 and is screened regularly on US college campuses. DAM, one of the Palestinian groups featured prominently in the film, arguably put Palestinian hip hop on a global map—their tracks and collaborations have perhaps done more than any single other Arab rap crew on the Eastern Mediterranean to draw global attention to Arabic rap from the Levant. They are Palestinians from the neglected city of Lyd, inside Israel. DAM's lyrics and tracks have been celebrated internationally as voices of young Palestinians resisting the Occupation. This continues to be the case despite the questionable politics some have critiqued in examples of the group's more recent work.[1]

Interesting here are not the merits of the *Slingshot Hip Hop* as a film, which by and large works well, especially to introduce US audiences unfamiliar with the realities of the Occupation to a Palestinian perspective, so often missing from media depictions of the Palestinian-Israeli "conflict." Nor are my concerns here a close reading of the aesthetic or political merits of DAM's musical work, which, like that of any artistic collaboration, has produced some memorable and some less than memorable ventures. Rather, what I want to highlight here is that the use of Nafar's testimony in the opening clip of the trailer is symptomatic of a larger phenomenon that triangulates simplistic representations of "whiteness," "blackness," and "Arabness" in order to construct easily readable analogies of politics in the Arab world for non-Arab audiences.

Arab Youth through the Lens of Hip Hop

In the full interview in the film, Nafar's comments about Public Enemy's *Fear of a Black Planet* are much more ambivalent than they are in the trailer. The trailer seemingly presents a direct link, in the Palestinian rapper's perspective, between urban struggle against racism in the US and Palestinian struggle under Occupation. In the film, the camera follows Nafar as he lists the DAM's musical and lyrical influences. He actually tells the viewer that he was not aware of and had not listened to Public Enemy (besides the track "Fight the Power" in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*) before listeners made the connection for him. Only then did he look for and find the album *Fear of a Black Planet*. As the scene in *Slingshot* progresses, Nafar rifles through a bookshelf full of Palestinian poetry and then he "breaks down what DAM is." It is "30 percent hip hop," and 30 percent the other literature he's been pointing to (Edward Said, Mahmoud Darwish, Tupac Shakur, Naji el-Ali, Ahlam Mestaghanmi, Nawal Al-Sadawi, Nizar Qabbani, Hanan Al-Sheikh). The final 40 percent, he explains, is "what's out there," indicating beyond the bars of his window: that is, the Occupation.

It is too simplistic to suggest that the trailer is somehow complicit in a misrepresentation of what Nafar explains in more detail in the film. Rather, in distilling a direct, simplified correlation between African American experience in a white US as related in *Fear of a Black Planet* to the experiences of Palestinians under Occupation, the trailer mobilizes, to the film's advertising benefit, an immediately attractive and sympathetic way to understand Arab political struggle for an English language audience. What makes this worthy of more extended analysis is that this trailer is not an isolated example.

Considerable activist and academic energy since the second Intifada has sought to draw connections between the anti-racist struggles of African Americans in the US and Palestinians under occupation, many of them using the presence of hip hop as proof of this affinity and solidarity.[2] To be sure, this work has, among other things, sought to unseat the dominant narrative of the violent, repressed Palestinian as "terrorist" in Western media. Neither is this enthusiasm about the taking up of hip hop only applied to Palestinian subjects.

Dozens of articles appeared in the exciting first weeks of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions in 2011 that similarly sought and explored the creative connections between US hip hop and Arab street protest. The BBC asked, for example, "Is Hip Hop Driving the Arab Spring?" and NPR affirmatively answered, "Tupac Encouraged the Arab Spring."[3] How can we explain the enthusiasm to understand some politically vocal Arab youth through the lens of hip hop? Why has the connection with this interpretation of African-American urban life and political expression proved such a saleable and important connection in framing some Palestinian and other urban Arab perspectives?

These questions quickly become more complicated than a few problematic journalistic forays into the "cultural production" of the Arab Spring. For example, political scientist Hisham Aidi has convincingly explored the deliberate exploitation of African American political and musical expression by the US State Department in cultural programming geared for the Muslim world in the wake of the Abu Ghraib prison torture scandal.[4] In marketing Muslim-American rap groups to Middle Eastern and Central Asian audiences deemed susceptible to the advance of Islamist fundamentalism, the State Department (in collaboration with the Brooklyn Academy of Music and Jazz at Lincoln Center) put together the Rhythm Road Tours. These concerts sent Muslim American rappers overseas to perform both their music, and their full assimilation into the US's tolerant, multi-cultural fabric.[5]

Aidi underscores how US state representations of Malcom X as civil rights' hero accompanied the Rhythm Road Tour's cultural outreach to win the hearts and minds worryingly estranged by the occupation of Iraq and the damning behavior of US servicemen and women abroad. Aidi calls this cultural programming (which included whitewashed representations of Malcom X's history and politics) attempts to "blackwash" the US's image abroad. That is, the tours are an example of neoliberal frameworks of representation that, in working to counter the negative backlash against neo-imperial policy, present images of African-American struggle for equality and history in the US as ideally American. This works because, as Mustafa Bayoumi explains, "What is more American today, after all, than African-American?"[6] While the political aims of the Rhythm Road Tours are quite different from the coverage of hip hop during the Arab Spring and Salloum's *Slingshot Hip Hop*, the mobilization of a racial imaginary that uses hip hop as a lens through which to access Arab or Muslim youth is strikingly similar.

Another documentary film about hip hop in the Arab world that closely reflects the politics of the Rhythm Road Tours is Joshua Asen and Jennifer Needleman's *I Love Hip Hop in Morocco* (2005). Like *Slingshot,* it also follows the lead-up to live hip hop concerts. As an inversion of the Rhythm Road forays in "hip hop diplomacy," American student Joshua Asen considered that sponsoring local Arab hip hop artists would have essentially the same effect as exporting American hip hop artists to the Arab world. Asen helped organize, and then with Needleman filmed, a "three-city hip hop festival" in Morocco. The success of the venture was described by the Cultural Affairs Officer at the US Embassy in Morocco: "Everything was positive and we got no negative feedback… There were American flags at all three concerts that spontaneously appeared—right side up and not on fire."[7] Asen added, "I'm saying flip it, sponsor American art as it's being reinterpreted

by locals, you get infinitely more mileage out of that." Hip hop, he concludes is "a democratic message, all about free speech and self-expression, and directly in line with US policy."[8]

In US state efforts to reach Arab audiences through hip hop, both the whitewashing of the legacy of American hip hop (by aligning it with US state policy) and blackwashing of the US abroad (by associating it with popular music like hip hop) become clear.[9] Ideas about the political impact of hip hop are used as shorthand towards Arab and Muslim youth and their political aspirations, while the political critique of capitalism and imperialism in strains of US hip hop are absorbed by the state and neutralized.

The mobilizations of ideas of "blackness" in carefully edited representations of Malcom X's political legacy; the presentation of hip hop as an intrinsically American expressive strategy to "speak truth to power"; the media coverage of hip hop during the Arab Spring; and the framework in the *Slingshot Hip Hop* trailer all mobilize the same racial imagination. While Asen's film and the Rhythm Road Tours use ideas about hip hop to soften the US's image, the *Slingshot* trailer and coverage of protest and rap use familiar ideas about rappers "speaking truth to power" to make familiar Palestinians and other Arab protesters. These are potentially very different political ideas. But they rely on essentially the same racialized constructions. In a time of increased interest in black-Arab solidarity organizing, I consider it worthwhile to examine carefully the navigations of similarity and difference that these political abstractions of race mobilize. That is, I am concerned with how ideas of "whiteness," "blackness," and "Arabness"—as racialized frameworks that carry with them simplified notions of the politics or political struggles of various populations—establish who and what is "political" and whether or not these "politics" are desirable or loathsome in neoliberal discourse. If "whiteness," as cultural studies scholars have deliberated for decades, stands in for the universalizing, normative ideal, "blackness," in my formulation here, stands in for a range of contrast with and to "whiteness" which is alternatively folded into or cast as outside of the neoliberal body public.[10] These representative frameworks are used to make sense of "Arabness." In addition to identifying that these racial caricatures exist, the point for me here is to interrogate how these racial caricatures assist the construction of neoliberal politics and policy. The proximity and distance that representations of "whiteness," "blackness," and "Arabness" navigate are importantly productive gestures that specifically inform neoliberal subjectivity and ideas of ideal political expression, *while* they parrot polite and predictably racist and orientalist ideas about both black and Arab experiences.

Blackwashing and the Liberal Imagination

Looking at associations of hip hop with particular political subjects in specifically politicized contexts help to tease out what Asian and Critical Ethnic Studies scholars Jasbir Puar, Rey Chow, and Susan Koshy identify as the "ascendancy of whiteness" in multicultural discourses.[11] Puar, Chow, and Koshy are interested in how "*the ethnic* aids the project of whiteness," or how the assimilation and integration of certain, ideal minorities are held up as success stories, reifying by denying white privilege—often in contradistinction to an unassimilable "black" example.[12] Their work helps to unpack how discourses of multicultural tolerance absorb specific racial others to distance and oppress the confluence of race and class elsewhere. Somewhat differently from them, in what follows I am less interested in how an Arab "ethnic" aids racist and classist neoliberal power, though this is a valuable political exercise. For the moment, however, I instead want to ask: Can *blackness* aid the project of whiteness?[13] By this I am not connecting actual African American individuals or experiences to the perpetuation of racial inequality and neo-imperialism in the Middle East. Rather, I am asking how liberal discourses about

Arab and Muslim others mobilize *ideas of* "black"ness in order to assimilate some Arab figures and eject others.

If "blackness" can "aid the project of whiteness,"[14] how does it do so, and at whose expense? Allusions to blackness that are mobilized to frame and understand the figures of both the Arab protester and the terrorist-thug resonate on a racial spectrum that works to make familiar an Arab other that is otherwise irredeemably strange. Building on Timothy Mitchell's work, the mobilization of ideas of blackness to understand Arab subjects and their politics is an example of a "carefully chaotic" curation of Arab subjectivity for a non-Arab audience.[15] These mobilizations of blackness in both positive and negative representations of Arab and Muslim others come to act as "one of multiple sites at which racial formation takes place," one which furthermore highlights a "dialectical relationship between blackness, whiteness," and Arabness.[16]

What political narratives does mobilizing blackness in this way serve? Blackwashed representations of Arab and Muslim actors depoliticize exciting and threatening Arab Others while simultaneously whitewashing US and European history, scrubbing the latter of elements of negative racial oppression (retaining only the sense of victory over injustice) and purging racial struggle of its class conflict and economic materiality. In other words, whitewashing and blackwashing are both neoliberal discursive and representational strategies that make figures familiar or strange and, in so doing, incorporate or distance them from what we might call, following Susan Koshy, a "refurbished American Dream." And here, "American Dream" only means an idealized neoliberal trajectory of political progression and economic development, to which the US, as the most politically "mature" and economically "sound" of the leaders of the "free world," has already arrived.

Moreover, blackwashing in negative representations—when the terrorist is rendered as former rapper/thug—offer important counter examples to the positive celebrations of protesters as hip hop artists in the early weeks and months of the Arab Spring. For example, in 2015, Israeli Prime Minister Bejamin Netanyahu's campaign for re-election ran an ad suggesting the Israeli left would surrender to terrorism. The "terrorists" in the ad, flying the flag of the misnamed "Islamic State," bobbed their heads to Arabic rap.[17] Or consider that, in 2014, the Lebanese rapper Double A the Preacherman was arrested in the southern suburbs of Beirut on the accusation that his baggy pants and beard made him look like a Salafist in a neighborhood reeling from a slew of suicide bombings.[18] Or, we might examine the press coverage that excitedly reported that the notorious IS fighter known in the English media as "Jihadi John"—the individual that the US considers responsible for the execution of US journalist James Foley—was a rapper in the UK before leaving to join the caliphate.[19] In similar reporting, Billboard and CNN, among other news sources, even warn about the emergence of a new subgenre, "jihadi rap" used as a recruiting tool for groups like IS and Al Qaeda. The efficacy of "jihadi rap," explains Billboard, is rooted in an affinity for "gangsta rap" and has to be understood as a "counterculture."[20] Both the illogic of IS—a self modeled, ultra-conservative, Islamist organization—earnestly using music to recruit fighters in Europe or the US, and the extremely poor quality of the music are brushed aside in order to manufacture the narrative of the existence of "jihadi rap" as an actually threatening recruiting strategy. Titles like "Nine Disturbingly Good Jihadi Raps," (in *Foreign Policy*) and "The Terrorist Recruiting Crossroads: Where Jihad Meets Rap" (by CNN) or Politico's "Al Qaeda's New Front: Jihadi Rap," communicate the threat "jihadi rap" poses with very little analysis of the reach, production, or supposed efficacy of the tracks in question.[21]

We thus find ourselves in a political environment where media outlets all but fall over themselves to celebrate hip hop in the Arab street as non-violent speaking truth to power,

while simultaneously framing rap as the insidious soundtrack to terrorism and the Muslim rapper as terrorist (and terrorist as rap-inclined thug). In such an environment, how should we critically understand the racial imaginations that mobilize urban "black" as an intermediary towards understanding "Arab" or "Muslim"? How do these mobilizations of "blackness" aid the production and ascendancy of "whiteness"—of multicultural, neoliberal, War-on-Terror-fighting norms?

I am arguing that a certain kind of orientalism with neoliberal characteristics depoliticizes by liberalizing Arab objects of representation and their expression. One of its strategies for doing so is "blackwashing"—evoking notions of blackness as shorthand for approaching and understanding the Arab Other. These racial imaginaries used in representative schemas of Arab youth are especially salient because of the ability of these ideas of blackness to depoliticize whether the Arab subject is, to adapt Mahmoud Mamdani's formulation a "good rapper" or a "bad rapper."[22] That is, this racialized imagination "obtains whether the other is perceived with dread or with desire."[23] The liberal celebrations of the Arab Spring and the expression that accompanied it are intimately linked to the more straight-forward racism of the discourses of the War on Terrorism. In fact, they are two sides of the same coin.

In the remainder of this article I first identify in more detail how representations of the "good rapper" work. Following this, I turn to the more "negative" representations to trace the formation and production of the "bad rapper" as terrorist-thug. My explorations here lean on a trajectory of work furthering Edward Said's postulations about how orientalism codifies and controls the oriental Other.[24] By tracing representations of the "good rapper," I consider the "gentler" orientalism of positive representations, where exotic allure is coupled with strange familiarity. Then, in tracking the construction of the "bad rapper" as terrorist-thug, I am concerned with how this gentler orientalism is parcel to the more violent racism of Islamophobia. Finally, in the conclusion to the piece, I consider a musical example of building racial imaginations between "white," "black," and "Arab" that does not rely on the neoliberal blackwashing I work to unpack here.

My exploration of how the figure of the "good rapper" functions politically is encouraged by Eng-Beng Lim's recent critiques of how celebrations of culture in post-colonial contexts can depoliticize Asian subjects. His identification of representations of exotic familiarity that tease and comfort a "Western gaze that cannot help trolling the world for the signs" of alternative culture "while expressing incredulity at what similarities can be found" is central to my own arguments about how hip hop has been mobilized as a lens through which to access Arab subjects.[25] That is, Lim's attention to how liberal economic policy, but also art criticism, academic study, and activism may re-inscribe "stereotypes even where they don't apply in order for the critique to make sense to a western audience"[26] encourages careful, critical attention to the racial representations that make Arab Others "readable" to specific audiences. This requires consideration even if the intention behind those representations is offered in a spirit of enthusiasm or solidarity.

In parsing out how the "bad rapper" is constructed and how this figure depoliticizes Arab and Muslim subjects, my postulations have been grounded by Jasbir Puar's work on how progressive, liberal, feminist, and queer discourses have furthered the very Islamophobia and exoticism they pretend to deplore. Puar suggests that racialized representations of the terrorist Other as essentially sexualized, repressed, or hopelessly religious dispense with the need to consider the material catalysts of "terrorist" acts.[27] My suggestion here is to consider how these racial ideas are constructed—specifically what political narratives give these figures meaning and attraction—in order to parse out more completely how they depoliticize.

This builds on Steven Salaita's recognition that anti-Arab racism has long relied on anti-Black, anti-Semitic, and anti-Native images and ideas.[28] My own point is that the specific formulations of blackness that help evoke the "Freedom Fighter" and the "thug" are additionally, inseparably intertwined with neoliberal political policy and fallout. So, the racialization I am considering is, like Puar's, "a figure for social formations and processes that are not only tied to what has been theorized as race."[29] Blackwashing as a strategy of neoliberal orientalism is also recognizing how class and other anti-imperial and anti-capitalist critiques are appropriated, assimilated, or cast out of the neoliberal body politic. I trace this racial imagining projected onto the figure of the Arab rapper, around whom I argue there are is vibrant resonance of fascination as well as assumptions of intelligibility.

"Good Rapper": Bringing Home the Freedom Fighter

In the wake of the Arab Uprisings, US, English, and French media rushed to highlight the new creative expression driving politics and change in Arab cities from Sidi Bouzid to Beirut. Despite a history of hip hop and rap in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) dating at least to the 1980s, the enthusiasm around 2011 for rap and graffiti cast Arab rappers as suddenly emerging onto the stage of global hip hop. For example, in that year *TIME* magazine named the Tunisian rapper El Général—briefly imprisoned for his track "Rais Lebled," which criticized the regime of then president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali—one of the top ten most influential people of that year. The profile of El Général (Hamada Ben Amor, aged 21 at the time) on *TIME's* website described him as a "rap star whose song 'Rais Lebled' is credited with helping inspire the uprising in his country… The song, which includes blunt allegations of government corruption, also became the anthem of protesters in Cairo's Tahrir Square."[30]

A number of things jump out in this description. First, the rapper's age is foregrounded (literally the first thing in his description after his name), illustrating the necessary connection in the appeal of rap in this region with what Ted Swedenburg has described as the Middle East's "imagined youths."[31] While the other profiles in "*TIME's* 100" also include the ages of individuals, that detail is woven in with descriptions of the individual's work and impact. The second notable feature of El Général's profile is its explanation of the political impact of the single song: "blunt allegations of government corruption." Corruption in Ben Ali's regime, despite enjoying consistent European and US support in the decades leading up to the revolution, is cast as an obvious foe to the young Tunisian rapper, who, with a song, can inspire revolution.[32] This connection of musical or creative expression to political mobilization fundamentally misunderstands (or deliberately sidelines) the political work that led up to the Tunisian revolution. Years of labor organizing and political mobilization are equated with or replaced by a single song.

The profile also suggests the song became "an anthem of protesters in Cairo." This connection is important for how it links the Tunisian political struggle with the Egyptian revolution which followed it and which much more completely captured imaginations in and outside of the Arab world.[33] Part of El Général's impact and the reason for his appearance on *TIME*'s list is thus described as what he was able to transfer to Egypt from Tunisia. Of course, the idea that the "Arab Spring" awakened a sleeping Arab populace across a dozen countries was an integral part of the romance and enthusiasm that captured global imaginations. In the Arab world, it ignited superficial ideas of pan-Arabism (I say superficial because the uprisings were never connected as a single, regional movement—either ideologically or materially.) In English-language media, the notion that the Arab Spring was contagious, spreading from one country to another, permitted the collapse in discourse and analyses (even sympathetic ones) of political and economic causes and other differences, and allowed for the creation of the figure of a generic "Arab

protester." Around this figure, contextual differences could be elided (and material, economic realities and their causes often ignored) in order to construct a singular freedom fighter with one concern: the ousting of a singularly despotic, oriental leader. El Général's profile and the description of his influence thus depends on a sequence of abbreviations that build an idea of Arab youth protest that is not very deeply tied to political reality.

If the Tunisian, Egyptian, Libyan, Yemeni, and Syrian political struggles were collapsed into a single, celebrated figure of the young "Arab protester," that protester was outfitted with a set of "freedom"-ready tools and expression. One of these tools was hip hop. Another was social media. While the BBC asked if hip hop was driving the Arab Spring one day, other outlets on other days debated the role of social media in the uprisings. Dozens of articles appeared asking, "The First Twitter Revolution?" and "Does Egypt Need Twitter?" substituting social media for hip hop as causative agent for the protests.[34] Importantly, these articles tended to acknowledge that "not all the credit" can go to Twitter or hip hop, while simultaneously painting pictures of media-savvy, poetically inclined, Tupac-listening young people as the new "Arab Street." This coverage repeats orientalist assumptions about the belated onset of Arab "modernity" while it ignores the diverse demographic make-up of Arab cities. It is only in contrast to the persistent orientalist ideas of Arabs as desperately violent and "their" politics as hopelessly chaotic and undemocratic that the image of a fully-globalized, Arab youth rhythmically protesting with a microphone can retain so fully the enthusiasm bestowed on rap in Arabic in the wake of the Uprisings. The Arab rapper "speaking truth to power" is an exciting, suddenly modern figure when imagined as emerging from out of the dust, backwardness, and oppression that is otherwise understood to characterize the Middle East and its politics. I am identifying this as problematic while questioning the ways in which "blackness," as attached to hip hop, helps to structure these ideas of modernity, progress, and political change.[35]

The celebration of the Arab Uprisings in the Western media belied the woefully widespread ignorance about the actual political and economic grievances of the denizens of the MENA, while perpetuating the most basic stereotypes of "eastern" political structures. The initially wholehearted support for these spontaneous revolutions against cartoonishly corrupt leaders failed to acknowledge the US and Europe's very active role in supporting and maintaining these regimes and decades of their policies of dispensing with democratic dissent.[36] Moreover, the idea that the revolutions were made possible by Twitter, Facebook, or hip hop deliberately sidelined the histories of labor organizing in countries like Tunisia and Egypt while giving short shrift to the neoliberal economic policies imposed on these countries over the course of the past three decades.[37] These narratives additionally accorded agency to Western technological tools, perpetuating the idea that Arab subjects were too simple or chaotic to have coordinated something on the scale of these revolutions on their own. Assertions like, "hip hop has become synonymous with *thawra* [revolution]… Arabian rappers are send[ing] an important message: Throw up your hands for peace!" irredeemably conflate revolution, "peace," and political critique as if they were all synonymous.[38]

Moreover, even when this coverage sites its conscious awareness of the limitations of the application of its analysis, it occludes a materialist, political exploration of the causes, catalysts, and agents in the protests. Cordelia Hebblethwaite writing for the BBC suggests for example that the affinity for "blunt-speaking" in hip hop, "made it particularly difficult for musicians in many tightly-controlled Arab states to express themselves."[39] Hebblethwaite opposes hip hop's essence to that of despotic Arab rulers. That is, it is not specific policies of imprisoning, torturing, and otherwise systematically discouraging dissent (with the express encouragement of US and European aid, often military, no less)

that makes it difficult for musicians to "express themselves." It is that hip hop's freedom-embracing bluntness is naturally opposed to the essence of Arab society and political development. That is why "until now, hip hop and rap have only had a limited reach within the Middle East and North Africa."[40] Moreover, the apparent spread of hip hop across this region is proof of the political changes at hand: "in recent months, hip hop appears to be gaining momentum rapidly in many Arab Spring countries."[41]

Why was this kind of coverage attractive? The enthusiasm to attach rap to protest is not only a question of quick journalism that has not done its homework. The number of stories relating causation between rap and protest in the Arab world speaks to an idea evidently shared among editors that this representative framework of Arab youth would both appeal to readers and allow for a sensitive, sympathetic portrayal of the uprisings. That this shorthand of Arab protester as rapper emerged at a moment when the vast majority of political pundits and politicians outside the Arab world were completely caught off guard by the protests actually makes this media content an important example of the ways in which liberal discourse functions, and the racial imaginaries upon which it relies. Ultimately, the coverage of rap during the Arab Spring tells us much more about the audience it hoped to reach than the subjects it supposedly covered.

The depoliticization of expressions of Arab and Muslim youth that I identify here is achieved as part of what Jasbir Puar has called a "theory of proximity," not a "rhetoric… of difference."[42] That is, efforts to understand especially the paradigm-shifting events of the Arab Uprisings through the lens of hip hop can be seen as attempts to transform cultural, economic, and political difference into familiarity. By casting the Arab protester as a familiar figure, creatively and nonviolently "speaking truth to power," media narratives converted the chaotic unknown (and incidentally, the occasional real violence) of Cairo and Tunis's street protests into an exciting but controlled iteration of liberal political change.

Puar tells us that terrorism is evaluated through theories of proximity, allowing for "familiarity and complicity." My suggestion is that the Arab Uprisings were also analyzed, framed, and understood by relying on "familiarity and complicity." Puar writes,

> It is not through the rhetoric of externality, of difference—cultural, economic, political, religious, psychological, or otherwise—that terrorism must be evaluated; what is needed is a theory of proximity that allows at once for both specificity and interiority, the interiority of familiarity and complicity.[43]

It is not only terrorism that needs to be made familiar. The massive upheavals on the streets of Arab countries also threatened to challenge the *pax Americana* that had supported despotism and inequality at the expense of the development of healthy democratic debate. Elsewhere, media pundits worried about the rise of political Islam in moderate groups like the Muslim Brotherhood. But in lieu of understanding moderate iterations of political Islam as the result of democratic processes and decades of political repression, much liberal media opted to celebrate the uprisings as part of a trajectory of always-lagging Arab modernity: this was the Arab '68, and the legacy of the US civil rights movement, and hip hop's speaking truth to power could be mobilized to render these protest movements familiar.

Rendering political change familiar is another way of saying it is recast "for an audience who can only see through a Western lens."[44] Eng-Beng Lim tells us that this discourse is "generated through or against the gaze of the straight white male and his mythic… other."[45] The "other" in this case is *both* "Arab" and "black," against whom all possible political adversaries are conceived. Contemporary politics are, on the one hand, cast

against the backdrop of the Arab and Muslim Other in the War on Terror, while on the other hand, politics are conceived of historically against the backdrop of the black Other in the assumed-to-be-eclipsed struggles for civil rights and the War on Drugs. That is, the struggles of black populations for equal rights are folded into "post-racial" societies as a remnant of a proud, storied past, not a turbulent present.

Through examples of media coverage of the presence of hip hop in the Arab spring I have attempted in this section to complement Aidi's work on the blackwashing of American history abroad with a consideration of how neoliberal media attempted to make the Arab protestor familiar by relying on similarly blackwashed notions of progressive trajectories for democratic politics. The attempts to draw connections between Arab rappers and an essence of American hip hop blackwash Arab rappers and Arab politics by superficially aligning them with (thoroughly whitewashed) goals and strategies of some civil rights expression (a "revolution" where you "throw your hands up for peace"). At the same time, blackwashing also takes the form of representations of terrorists and potential terrorists as "thugs" or rappers. Media attention to the affinity for rapping of mercenaries of the so-called Islamic State conjured the urban "thug" as predecessor of IS terrorist.

"Bad Rapper": Casting the Terrorist-Thug

Fast-forward from the hey days of the Arab Uprisings to Benjamin Netanyahu's 2015 reelection campaign. One of the last particularly racist forays launched by the incumbent Israeli president and his Likud party in that term was a TV advertisement released in March 2015. The main aim of the ad sought to scare Israelis into voting for Likud by linking the Israeli Left to terrorism. In the ad, which has since been removed from the internet, a white truck flying the iconic IS flag pulls up next to another car on a desert highway. Bearded fighters stand manning RPGs on the bed of the truck. Inside, they bob their heads gravely to loud music. In Hebrew, through comically thick Arabic accents, the men roll down their windows to ask the next car, "Which way to Jerusalem?" The response comes, "Take a left." The IS truck swerves off to the left. Text punctuated with bullet sounds and bullet marks flashes across the screen, reading: "The Left will surrender to terror."[46]

The music blaring from the IS truck throughout the ad is part of the song "*Ghorbah*" [Estrangement] by the Amman-based Palestinian hip hop group Torabyeh.[47] There are legal proceedings underway regarding the sampling of the song, which of course does not endorse IS (the song is about growing up in exile and the dream of returning to Palestine).[48] But what is revealing is how the Arabic rap music paradoxically assists the construction of an Islamophobic image of an existential political threat. Under the beards, the IS flag, Arabic accents, and RPGs affixed to the truck, the rap music (which would be scorned by Islamist extremists, one should think) nonetheless adds to the "thuggishness" of the terrorists, who bob to the beat in an imitation of street-hardened confidence. The Israeli political campaign ad clearly constructs caricatures of Arab terrorists. But its construction of those terrorists relies in part on much-circulated caricatures of black gangsters and "gangsta rap," however incompatible these traits are with the fundamentalist religious practices they are meant to evoke.

Similar racialization occurred in stories about rap and IS in 2014 in the wake of the beheading of American journalist James Foley. The video of the beheading was the first of several to purportedly feature an IS commando by the name of "Jihadi John" (since identified as Mohamed Emwazi, reportedly killed in a US airstrike on November 12, 2015). In the rush to identify the killer, the British *Sunday Times* identified a rapper "L Jinny" as the disgruntled youth behind the executions. It turns out that Abdel-Majed Abdel Bary, the rapper who used the name L Jinny, was not "Jihadi John" but an associate of Mohamed

Emwazi (and who is at time of writing currently on the run from both IS and the UK.)[49] In another example, reports about German national Denis Cuspert who converted to Islam and joined IS similarly focused on his former life as "rapper" Deso Dogg.[50]

This reporting emphasizes the very drastic shift from rapper to IS fighter in these individual's lives at the same time that it underscores criminal and anti-social tendencies the individual always possessed, manifest in their affinity for rap music. Press on Abdel-Majed Abdel Bary emphasizes how his rap lyrics "provide chilling clues" to the disgruntled Londoner's "rage."[51] Like the Netanyahu campaign ad, this emphasis on past or private lives rapping points to an inherent "thugness" that is meant to evoke images of urban danger. The fact that this coverage can do this while simultaneously emphasizing the surprising transformation from lyricist to executioner points to the ambiguous tension with which positive and negative imagined connotations of the Muslim rapper can be held.

In both the Netanyahu ad and the coverage of the former rappers turned IS fighters, racialized representations of urban gangsters help to estrange the Muslim terrorist as antithetical to Israeli and European society. The notion that the terrorist is or was formerly a thug coax a racist imaginary taught to fear black sociality as violent into similar feelings towards the fundamentalist Muslim threat (and vice versa). Netanyahu's campaign ad and its incorporation of Arabic rap is a stunningly clear example of just how neatly the slide from thug to terrorist can be mobilized and just how quickly the freedom-fighting hip hop head can be flipped into a menacing terrorist threat. These examples illustrate how specifically neoliberal racializations—evoked by the realities of the dangerous, urban gangster have bled through from the "War on Drugs" to the "War on Terror." Thus, these constructions of "blackness," "whiteness," and "Arabness" are not abstract racial essences that exist somewhere in the world, but timely political racializations that specifically build on recent histories of militarization, securitization, and ghettoization. In connecting the obvious Islamophobia that casts the terrorist as thug with the gentler orientalism that celebrates the arrival of hip hop to the "Arab Street," we can see how neoliberal policy and discourse whitewashes and blackwashes to its own benefit. The attractiveness or unattractiveness of representative frameworks that mobilize specific ideas of blackness as a way of understanding politics in a turbulent Middle East are specific shorthand that builds on the very devastating histories of neoliberal failure (the War on Drugs) to maintain a neoliberal present (the War on Terror) and prepare for a neoliberal future that is both racially and economically divided. Considerations of black-Arab solidarity, especially in times of protest, uprising, and the ubiquitous manufacturing of security "threats," must insist on the specificity of affinity in racial oppression and racial struggle to avoid perpetuating imagined neoliberal racial proximity that strips the politics and material realities from anti-racist, anti-imperial, and anti-capitalist struggle. To conclude this essay on a more positive note, I move away from the limiting representations of "white," "black," and "Arab" mobilized in the representations of Arab and Muslim subjects I have considered above. I examine one alternative triangulation of "whiteness," "blackness," and "Arabness" and the political implications therein.

"How much can one be black under the rule of rich and white?"

I opened this essay by suggesting that the trailer to *Slingshot Hip Hop* presented an abstracted but attractive framework for understanding the experiences of Palestinians living in Israel. If, as I have argued here, this racialized framework deserves some critique, it is not to ignore or disavow the reality of racial discrimination under the Israeli Occupation. My argument has been that racial relationships and accompanying power

dynamics are always invoked in specific ways, playing consciously or unconsciously on particular understandings of "black," "white," and "Arab" that have political resonances. In Nafar's formulation in *Slingshot Hip Hop*, the Palestinians are like black Americans, the Zionists like white Americans, with the attendant resonances of oppressor and oppressed. This is a particular formulation of race and politics that offers and delimits political possibilities. The shorthand towards the racial dialectic in *Slingshot* is geared to a specific audience: a young, liberal one outside of the Arab world, to whom the film communicates that Palestinians are not all fundamentalist "terrorists," that they are young people who read, work, play, and like rap music, among other things.

But we might remember that this racial dialectic is not the only way in which race relations or "blackness" and "whiteness" and "Arabness" may be mobilized, analyzed, or mined for political frameworks, especially perhaps in contemporary Israel. I bring my thoughts on blackwashing and representing Arabs and politics here to a close with a consideration of other ways to articulate the relationship between "whiteness," "blackness," and "Arabness" using as an example Jowan Safadi's "To Be an Arab." Safadi is an independent Palestinian musician living in Haifa. His work borders pop, electronic, and alt-rock, and is sung in a mixture of Arabic and Hebrew. Like DAM, he is a '48 Palestinian (living inside Israel) and his work occasionally considers the experiences of Arabs in Israel.

Caption: Jowan Safadi's "To Be an Arab," released August 11, 2015.

His 2015 track "To Be an Arab" is an especially powerful examination of racism in Israel. The piece invokes race relations between black, white, and Arab but does so without mobilizing the stereotypical ideas of blackness through hip hop or gangtsa rap that I have discussed here. Sung mostly in Hebrew, the piece is directed at an imagined Mizrahi or Sephardic "Arabophobe." The lyrics read:

> Hardcore homophobes are the most gay on the inside
>
> Mizrahi Arabophobes are Arabs themselves
>
> Who are just afraid
>
> And prefer to stay in the closet
>
> Because they know, they know best
>
> That to be an Arab is not that great
>
> It's hard to be an Arab
>
> It's really hard, ask me
>
> It's hard to be an Arab
>
> How much can one be black

Under the rule of the rich and white

In the racist state…?

Sephardim or Mizrahi, once they two were Arabs

They changed their names to change their destiny

Because they know, they know best

They know better than anyone

They paid the bloody price

They learned it on their skin

It's hard to be an Arab

It's really hard, ask me

It's hard to be an Arab

How much can one be black

Under the rule of the rich and white

In the racist state?

In Arabic:

Listen to me, dude

You need to know where you came from

And where you're going to

And what you're going to find here

Standing in the streets chanting: 'Death to Arabs!' and such shit

You're an Arab, man, more fucked than I am.

Back to Hebrew:

Hey, you imported Arab

Take it from a local Arab

You were dragged here

To take my place

It's hard to be an Arab

It's really hard, ask me

It's hard to be an Arab

How much can one be black

Under the rule of the rich and white

In the land…. Of Palestine

In the video, Safadi, flanked by dancing girls and smoking a water pipe in a car parked on a beach, sings to the imagined "Arabophobe," who we see dressing for a Zionist march. As Safadi sings "Hardcore homophobes are the most gay on the inside/ Mizrahi Arabophobes

are Arabs themselves/ Who are just afraid," the Arabophobe dons a black t-shirt sporting the logo of Lehava, a far-right Jewish political organization, and draws a serious star of David onto each cheek. Fully dressed, we see the Arabophobe arrive on the beach where Safadi sits in the car, singing. Accompanied by men with clubs, the Arabophobe threatens Safadi, who gets out of the car to respond to the assaults by addressing him coolly in Arabic. By the end of his confiding in the Arabophobe ("Listen to me, dude/ You need to know where you came from/ And where you're going to… Standing in the streets chanting: 'Death to Arabs!' and such shit…You're an Arab, man, more fucked than I am") the two have seemingly come to understand each other. Consequently, the entourage of both the Arabophobe and Safadi erupt in a mixed dance party, replete with ululations. Meanwhile, a "white" couple passing the party on the beach dressed in fitness spandex, shake their head at the ethnic spectacle as they jog by. At this point, Safadi ends the refrain "How much can one be black/ Under the rule of the rich and white/ In the racist state—" with the rejoinder "of Palestine." With this, the Arabophobe startles and appears to want to threaten Safadi again as the screen fades to black.

The playing on racial identities here is particular to the Zionist context of Israeli emigration and discrimination. In identifying the racism he lives in Israel, Safadi casts a racialized triangle between Ashkenazi (European) Jews, Mizrahi and Sephardic (Arab and North African) Jews, and Arabs in Israel. "How much can one be black under the rule of rich and white?" highlights the spectrum of racial differentiation and discrimination in contemporary Israel without casting the Palestinian "as" the only "black" and the Zionist "as white" and without positioning black on the spectrum of neoliberal familiarity I have worked to identify above. Instead, Safadi deliberately highlights the particular hierarchies between "whiteness," "blackness," and "Arab" that structure Israeli society. His triangulation plays on notions of indigeneity as well as race ("Hey you imported Arab/ Take it from a local Arab") all while pushing on possibilities for some Jewish-Arab affinity "under the rule of rich and white."[52] Here the intersectional study explored is not between Arabs and blacks, or the experiences of either's oppression in comparison to the other. Rather, Safadi draws a constellation of racial oppression along a spectrum of racist "blackness" that applies to both Arabs and Mizrahi Jews inside white supremacist Israel. At the same time, the construction of this smoking, dancing, hot-headed, "Arab/black/Mizrahi" ethnicity against the "fit" and "healthy" "white" one weaves a class critique into his denouncement of racism in Israel. "Under the rule of rich and white" in historic Palestine estranges both the Arab and the non-European Jew. But this racism has none of the trappings of recognizable politics mobilized in Netanyahu's ad or media celebrations of hip hop freedom fighters. Safadi's track, an intelligent, witty deconstruction of Zionist racism and Jewish racial construction works not by restaging stereotypes of "blackness," "whiteness," and "Arabness" but by constructing them in relation to each other in a way particular to the Israeli context. Such a construction illuminates the complex racial dynamics of Zionist occupation and settler colonialism without blackwashing.

In this article I have attempted to draw attention to the ways in which some liberal discourses have mobilized racial imaginations in order to make familiar or make strange specific Arab subjects. Following examples of discussion of rap and hip hop in neoliberal media around political developments in the Arab world like the Palestinian intifadas, the "Arab Spring," and the rise of the "Islamic State" illuminate ways in which both progressive and conservative discourses mobilize specific dialectical constructions of "whiteness," "blackness," and "Arabness" to depoliticize both Arab and Muslim agents and histories of anti-racist struggle and expression.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to *Lateral*'s editorial team and to the two anonymous reviewers who helped me to strengthen these arguments considerably. Shortcomings remain my own.

Notes

1. See for example, Lila Abu Lughod and Maya Mikdashi, "Tradition and the Anti-Politics Machine: DAM Seduced by the 'Honor Crime,'" *Jadaliyya*, November 23, 2012, accessed April 19, 2016, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/8578/tradition-and-the-anti-politics-machine_dam-seduce.
2. See for example, Alex Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); and Sunaina Maira, *Jil Oslo: Palestinian Hip Hop, Youth Culture, and the Youth Movement* (Washington, DC: Tadween Publishing, 2013).
3. Cordelia Hebblethwaite, "Is Hip Hop Driving the Arab Spring?," *BBC News*, July 24, 2011, accessed November 1, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14146243; and Michel Martin, "Tupac Encouraged the Arab Spring," *NPR*, March 20, 2013, accessed April 19, 2016, http://www.npr.org/2013/03/20/174839318/tupac-encouraged-the-arab-spring.
4. Hisham Aidi, *Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014).
5. I explore other examples of blackwashing at BAM elsewhere. See Rayya El Zein, "Call and Response, Radical Belonging, and Arabic Hip-Hop in 'the West,'" in *American Studies Encounters the Middle East*, eds. Marwan Kraidy and Alex Lubin (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 104-134.
6. Moustafa Bayoumi, "The Race Is On: Muslims and Arabs in the American Imagination," *Middle East Report*, March 2010, accessed April 19, 2016, http://www.merip.org/mero/interventions/race.
7. Quoted in Patrick Sisson, "The Message: Can Hip Hop Diplomacy Help Fix American's Tarnished Image Abroad?" April 2008, accessed April 19, 2016, http://patricksisson.com/the-message-can-better-hip-hop-diplomacy-help-fix-america's-tarnished-image-abroad/.
8. Ibid. Included in *I Love Hip Hop in Morocco* press packet.
9. Of course this "cultural diplomacy" and its appropriation of African American musical experimentation is not new. Hisham Aidi explains how "hip hop diplomacy" is an extension of the "jazz ambassadors" program sponsored by the Eisenhower administrations during the Cold War; Aidi, *Rebel Music*. On the Jazz Ambassadors program see Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).
10. On "whiteness" in cultural studies see, among many others, Shelley fisher Fishkin, "Interrogating 'Whiteness,' Complicating 'Blackness': Remapping American Culture," *American Quarterly* 47 (1995): 428-466. I use "blackness" as the assumed coutnerpoint to "whiteness" the way Susan Koshy does–to deconstruct the binary of racial affinity and difference between "white" and "black." While she interrogates how this binary can be deconstructed by analyzing how an "Asian" intermediary navigates this binary, I am asking how blackness is used to approximate "Asian," here rendered as "Arab," for a neoliberal audience. See Susan Koshy, "Morphing Race into Ethnicity: Asian Americans and Critical Transformations of Whiteness," *boundary 2* 28, no. 1 (2001): 153-194.
11. Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in*

Contemporary Cultural Studies (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993); and Koshy, "Morphing Race into Ethnicity."

12. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 31, emphasis added.
13. I use "blackness," "whiteness," and "Arabness" in the vein of critical anti-racism scholarship that marks ideas about race, racialized others, and power. These terms do not invoke actual racial characteristics like skin color.
14. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 31.
15. Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.
16. I am adapting Susan Koshy's phrase here. Koshy is interested in "the dialectical relationship between blackness, whiteness, and Asianness." Koshy, "Morphing Race into Ethnicity," 174.
17. Nick Robins-Early, "Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu is Getting Sued by a Jordanian Rapper," *The Huffington Post*, February 18, 2015, accessed April 19, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/18/jordanian-rapper-netanyah_n_6707094.html.
18. Marc Daou, "Lebanese 'Funk-Hop' Artist Mistaken for Terrorism," *France 24*, January 23, 2014, accessed April 19, 2016, http://www.france24.com/en/20140123-lebanese-funk-hop-artist-mistaken-terrorist-hussein-charafeddine-beirut.
19. Staff, "Former British Rapper Reportedly Under Investigation for James Foley Beheading," *Billboard*, August 23, 2014, accessed April 19, 2016, http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/6229155/abdel-majed-abdel-bary-james-foley-beheading-l-jinny-british-rapper.
20. Richard Smirke, "Jihadi Rap: Understanding the Subculture," *Billboard*, October 10, 2014, accessed April 19, 2016, http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/6273809/jihadi-rap-l-jinny-abdel-majed-abdel-bary.
21. J. Dana Stuster, "9 Disturbingly Good Jihadi Raps," *Foreign Policy*, April 29, 2013, accessed April 19, 2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/29/9-disturbingly-good-jihadi-raps/; Ed Payne and Jason Carroll, "The Terrorist Recruiting Crossroads: Where Jihad Meets Rap," *CNN*, January 14, 2015, accessed April 19, 2016, http://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/13/us/jihadi-rap/; and Amil Khan, "Al Qaeda's New Front: Jihadi Rap," *POLITICO*, August 31, 2014, accessed April 19, 2016, http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/08/al-qaedas-new-front-jihadi-rap-110481.
22. Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Doubleday, 2005).
23. Joseph Boone, "Vacation Cruises; Or, the Homoerotics of Orientalism," *PMLA* 110 (1995): 90.
24. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1977).
25. Eng-Beng Lim, *Brown Boys and Rice Queens: Spellbinding Performance in the Asias* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 121.
26. Lim, *Brown Boys and Rice Queens*, 184.
27. Puar writes about the Federal Research Division's research into terrorism: "Although Osama bin Laden is hailed as the 'prototype of a new breed of terrorist–the private entrepreneur who puts modern enterprise at the service of a global terrorist network,' religion–not politics, not economics–is figured as the reason behind terrorist activity." Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 55.

28. Steven Salaita, "Beyond Orientalism and Islamophobia: 9/11, Anti-Arab Racism, and the Mythos of National Pride," *Centennial Review* 10 (2006): 245-266; and Steven Salaita, *Anti-Arab Racism in the USA: Where It Comes from and What It Means for Politics Today* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).
29. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, xii.
30. No author, "The 2011 TIME 100," *TIME*, accessed November 1, 2014, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2066367_2066369_2066242,00.html.
31. Ted Swedenburg, "Imagined Youths," *Middle East Report* 36 (2007), accessed April 19, 2016, http://www.merip.org/mer/mer245/imagined-youths.
32. See Nouri Gana, ed., *The Making of the Tunisian Revolution: Contexts, Architects, Prospects* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).
33. Timothy Mitchell explores the role Egypt plays in Western imagination in *Colonising Egypt*.
34. Ethan Zuckerman, "The First Twitter Revolution?" *Foreign Policy*, January 15, 2011, accessed November 25, 2015, http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/01/15/the-first-twitter-revolution-2/; and Malcom Gladwell, "Does Egypt Need Twitter?" *The New Yorker*, February 2, 2011, accessed November 25, 2015, http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/does-egypt-need-twitter.
35. Ethnomusicologist Timothy Taylor explores how blackness can be "subsumed into a larger category of 'western' or 'modern.'" Timothy Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 155.
36. See among others Gilbert Achcar, *The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising*, translated by Geoffrey Michael Goshgarian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).
37. See among others: Bassam Haddad, "The Role of Workers and Labor Unions in the Egyptian Revolution," April 9, 2011, accessed November 25, 2015, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/1202/the-role-of-workers-and-labor-unions-in-the-egypti.
38. Amber Leon, "'Arab Spring' Draws Inspiration from American Hip-Hop," *The Grio – MSNBC*, September 15, 2011, accessed April 19, 2016, http://thegrio.com/2011/09/15/hip-hop-inspires-arab-freedom-fighters-1/.
39. Hebblethwaite, "Is Hip Hop Driving the Arab Spring?"
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 61.
43. Ibid.
44. Lim, *Brown Boys and Rice Queens*, 184.
45. Ibid., 188.
46. Hebrew translations quoted in Lisa Goldman, "Netanyahu Campaign Video: A Victory for the Left Means an ISIS Invasion," *+972 Magazine*, February 15, 2015, accessed April 7, 2015, http://972mag.com/netanyahu-campaign-video-a-victory-for-the-left-means-an-isis-invasion/102703/.
47. "Torabyeh – Gorbah ft. Husam Abed," YouTube video, 4:57, posted by "Torabyeh," February 13, 2012, accessed April 7, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zGnGeiMun8#t=73.

48. Nick Robins-Early, "Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu is Getting Sued by a Jordanian Rapper," *The Huffington Post*, February 18, 2015, accessed April 7, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/18/jordanian-rapper-netanyah_n_6707094.html.
49. Huffington Post UK, "British Hip Hop Jihadist Abdel-Majed Abdel Bary Poses In Syria With Severed Head," *The Huffington Post*, August 14, 2014, accessed November 19, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/08/14/british-hip-hop-jihadist-abdel-majed-abdel-bary-syria-severed-head_n_5677555.html; Debra Killalea, "'Jihad John': Rap Song Lyrics Provide Chilling Clues into His Rage," *News.com.au*, September 3, 2014, accessed November 15, 2015, http://www.news.com.au/world/middle-east/jihad-john-rap-song-lyrics-provide-chilling-clues-into-his-rage/news-story/4192d19f7006713cb91eb02a48a1f3a2.; Jose Lynch, "Jihadi John Reportedly Identified — He's Not A British Rapper," *Billboard*, February 26, 2015, accessed November 16, 2015, http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/6487303/jihadi-john-not-british-rapper.
50. See Jack Crone, "German Rapper-Turned ISIS Extremist Who Starred in Sick Beheading Video 'was Married to FBI Agent,'" *The Daily Mail*, February 16, 2015, accessed November 19, 2015, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2956077/German-rapper-turned-ISIS-extremist-starred-sick-beheading-video-spied-FBI-WIFE.html; Paul Cruickshank, "German Rapper who Joined ISIS killed in U.S. Strike, Official says," *CNN.com*, October 30, 2015, accessed November 19, 2015, http://edition.cnn.com/2015/10/29/politics/german-isis-rapper-killed-denis-cuspert/; Benjamin Weinthal, "FBI had Spy in Bedroom of German Rapper turned ISIS Poster Boy, Says Report," *FoxNews.com*, February 16, 2015, accessed April 19, 2016, http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/02/16/fbi-had-spy-in-bedroom-german-rapper-turned-isis-poster-boy-says-report.html.
51. Debra Killalea, "'Jihad John': Rap Song Lyrics Provide Chilling Clues into His Rage."
52. Importantly, he does this without pushing a liberalized "peace and coexistence" narrative, either. The piece, while it explores racial affinity among Jews and Arabs, is searing in its critique of Zionist Israel.

Bio



Rayya El Zein

Rayya El Zein holds a PhD in Theatre from the Graduate Center, City University of New York. Her dissertation was about rap and hip hop concerts in three Arab cities. She lives in Tbilisi, Georgia.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.

ISSN 2469-4053

Lateral
JOURNAL OF THE CULTURAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Jonathan Beller, "Informatic Labor in the Age of Computational Capital," *Lateral 5.1* (2016).

https://doi.org/10.25158/L5.1.4

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 5.1 (Spring 2016)

Informatic Labor in the Age of Computational Capital

Jonathan Beller

ABSTRACT Jonathan Beller expands conversations about the role of the digital and the digital humanities through attention to the mechanisms by which the digital image is instrumental in neoliberal capitalist accumulation and colonialism. Beller argues that the digital image itself exploits the attentive labor of those who see it, organizes profitable patterns of spectatorship, and links communication directly to financial speculation. Through scrutiny of examples that attempt to disrupt the profitable, algorithmically-capitalized flow of data and attention through the interface of the screen, Beller's article makes a pointed critique of the ways that fascism manifests in and might be combated via digital economies.

Image-Code-Financialization

With the undeniable rise of variants of fascism in the United States and around the world, an up to date account of the logistics of antidemocratic mediations is urgent. Here (as everywhere) I take it as axiomatic that capitalism and democracy are structurally contradictory—"capitalist democracy" and "democratic capitalism" are in fact oxymorons. The strategic management of that contradiction by a system dedicated to conserving class power leads to what Walter Benjamin famously identified as the aestheticization of politics, or what Orwell understood as a short-circuiting of thought, and what today we might be calling "the politics of affect," a term that among other things would indicate a schism—and thus a mediation—between individual experience and systemic rationale. By means of aestheticization and the preservation/re-invention of ritual (cult) values, Benjamin told us, the masses are granted "not their right but instead a chance to represent themselves."[1] Since the 1930s, the Führer cult and the celebrity, as both artifact and means of expropriation have obviously "evolved," even as they provided the shape of things to come in what now appears as a kind of fractalization of celebrity. Fractal variants would include fundamentalisms from that of ISIS to Tea Partiers; other racist nationalisms like Golden Dawn in Greece, Le Pen in France, and Trump in the US; the branded conversions of persons and objects into franchises; as well as many state nationalisms including (but unfortunately not limited to) those of France, China, Israel, and the US. Such opportunistic occasions for representation—in which individuals, icons, scapegoats and flags serve at once to figure collective authority and as points of narcissistic subjectification and phallic compensation, separated from any ability to transform hierarchical property relations—exist necessarily, through the suppression, that is, the unrepresentation and unrepresentability of others. The non-representation of most of us in these racializing and gendering iconographies that, in the last instance, are written on our bodies and indeed every body, is a condition of possibility for both the leveraged accumulation of private property and the star-commodity and provides a lingua franca for political struggle enframed by a capitalist imaginary. Here writing means the practical subjugation of peoples to meet the exigencies of hierarchical structures of representation —Debord's spectacle in binary code. Thus, symptoms of such suppression include not only

the celebrity form (the authoritarian personality and its fractal multiplications on, for example, Instagram, who exist through the accumulation of our attention), but the various and dynamically evolving racisms, sexisms, and nationalisms, with their circulating, prejudices, hatreds and phobias.[2] The plurality of fascisms represents, quite literally if not quite intelligibly, the mutual competition at multiple scales among the many capitals.

The cultural field, as Marxists, feminists, anti-colonialists, anti-racists, queer activists, radical filmmakers, poets, activists, and many others have long recognized (despite our significant and often problematic differences) is also a battlefield. Since Benjamin, and with the passage through what was called "postmodernism" (a periodization that retrospectively can be understood to have marked the real subsumption of the cultural by the economic), we have learned to understand culture not merely as a medium of politics, but as a means of socio-economic production and reproduction as well as of potentially radical transformation. Here I have in mind a broad range of phenomenon informed by radical imaginaries, found nearly everywhere we people seek freedom in cultural pursuits: from its trace presences in fan détournement in places like "An Archive of Our Own" to its concerted concentrations in a socio-critical work like Allen Feldman's *Archives of the Insensible* with its indefatigable critique of "dismediation," "apophatic blurring," and metaphysics as a medium of war.[3] The forms of counter-culture are, of course, myriad, and every sentence made for this essay owes a debt to an infinity of struggle—I mention the archive because it indicates a topos for this struggle in addition to the more familiar notions of literature, cinema, ideology, etc.

The new situation of culture as means of production (and here we should probably say "cultures," even though, given the situation, inclusivity is the last thing some of us want) is that it has been largely functionalized by political economy. This historical repositioning of culture as on a continuum with the shop floor and the factory is an economic and technical result and raises the question of a technics of fascism as a technics of computation, or of what I call "computational capital." While it is usually understood that culture has a relation to economics and technology, what remains less well understood is the degree to which, from a hegemonic standpoint, culture has become a technical and economic relation. Cultural practices are posited and presupposed as productive for a capitalism that was, in hindsight, itself already a computer (Digital Culture 1.0) and that today requires discrete state machines (Digital Culture 2.0) for its profitable and intensifying operations by which qualities are transformed into quantities. The rise of visual culture during the twentieth century, and the re-organization of the life world by that interface called the screen along with the calculus of the image, was a requisite step in the financialization of culture and its real subsumption by capital. The succeeding phase, for which digital culture (2.0) serves as both consequence and pre-requisite, marks a heavy investment in the extension of quantitative logics into the micro- and nano-logical operations of the formerly analogue endeavors—all of which, including language, images, aesthetic form, philosophy, spirituality, the imagination and the like, fell under the auspices of the now defunct humanities and are today rigorously and almost inexorably submitted to background monetization.

This financialization of culture, as we shall see, requires the informationalization of social practice, indeed, of the social metabolism. Managed by means of screens, information flows from users (and the used) to capital in a pattern that can be described by the sequence Image-Code-Financialization. If it can be said that fascism and/or other contemporary antidemocratic state-formations legitimating hierarchizing modes of production depend upon leveraged value extraction, and that much if not all of that value passes through/as data and its organized transmission (number of hours worked, links clicked, pages viewed, money banked), then data flow disruption or redistribution—

though tremendously varied and relatively unexplored through the lens of a critique of political economy—presents key tactics and perhaps strategies in an anti-fascist praxis. The flow of information-value up the value chain does not trickle back down in equal amount either to populism's mass participants or really to most content providers. I want here to give a set of examples of partial or successful data-flow disruptions, but more pointedly to conceptualize forms of potential intervention through data disruption by analytically parsing the micro-dynamics of images and screens—and the practices they organize. Understanding the emergent relationships between image, code and discourse/culture/profit effectively exposes sites and possibly means by which to interrupt the expropriative valorization processes of capitalism—the "valorizing information," to use the term that Romano Alquatti presciently used to describe workers' contributions at Olivetti in the 1960's, that is today everywhere extracted.[4] It also suggests that despite the invisibility of an increasing proportion of machine operation in ultra-fast, ultra-small computation, in the internet of things and in what crypto-currency programmers are calling "the internet of value," the screen/image retains key functions and is, in fact a necessary moment in the valorization process of capitalist computing. The analysis of the screen/image that at once serves as interface and engenders the production of both data and meta-data raises the question of what it might mean to seize the means of production, particularly when many if not most readers (here just like most readers and non-readers everywhere) are experiencing a crisis of control not just over the management of the (built) environment, the workplace and its infrastructure, but over their attention, interiority, self-image, imagination, social practices, relationships, and time. The survival of all of these forms of precarity, remunerated or not, is at once bound up with the seeming impenetrability of informatics and algorithmic governance while having become means of production for capital. As I hope will be apparent, the struggle over the means of production, includes the domain of socio-cultural analysis and conceptualization, as well as of culture and interiority, in addition to the more familiar notions of fixed capital. Such analysis provides a necessary, even if by no means sufficient, component of struggle.

The Programmable Image, or, From M to M'

In a forthcoming essay entitled "The Programmable Image of Capital: M-I-C-I'-M' and the World Computer," I argue that in order to correct the multiple misunderstandings in various "post-Marxist" analyses of capital that assume that value has become "immeasurable," it is necessary to bring the labor theory of value up to date.[5] In "The Programmable Image" I extend my earlier hypothesis of the attention theory of value in *The Cinematic Mode of Production* (in which "labor" was understood as a subset of the emergent yet more capacious category of "attention" and, conversely, attention reduces to what used to be called labor at the sub-light speeds of non-screen-mediated production), and rewrite the general formula for capital, M-C-M' (where M is money, C is the commodity, and M' is a greater quantity of money realized in the sale of the commodity C), as M-I-C-I'-M'.

In this new equation, we replace commodity C with I-C-I', where I is image, C is Code and I' is a modified image). Where paradigmatically, labor had once been sedimented in the commodity-object, I had argued in *The Cinematic Mode of Production* that attention was sedimented in the image, and furthermore that commodities and images converged as image-commodity.[6] In the cases of both labor and attention, sensuous activity produced surplus value for capital through dissymetrical exchange. With the wage, as Marx clearly showed, workers put more value into the creation of commodities than they receive in their wages, with spectatorship, spectators do more to valorize and legitimate images, media platforms and the *status quo* than they receive in pleasure or social currency. In

bringing the industrial revolution to the eye, the cinema opened up the mediational spaces of what would become known in autonomist Marxism as the social factory—albeit in a manner that was more or less incognizant to the technical and indeed techno-logical aspects of this very mediation. In my most recent work I have endeavored to show that forms of attention result in the modification of code on the pathway to monetization. This relationship between image and code, I argue, is the paradigmatic form of leveraged mediation in the distributed production and consumption of post-Fordist capital. Value extraction, instead of taking place only during wage labor as it was purported to do under industrial capital, can take place anywhere in a network in which oscillations between image and code occur. The embodied entity, formally know as the "laborer" or the "human" is still the source of all value for capitalism, but has, to use a cutting term from Sean Cubitt, been structurally reduced to a "biochip" in an increasingly ubiquitous computational armature.[7] The absorption of value is thus no longer paradigmatically organized around a factory worker producing an object for a wage. In our era there has been an exponential intensification of the number, form, and distribution of sites of production as well as in the metrics of evaluation and remuneration. As "Bifo" aka Franco Berardi puts it, production and valorization have become, "cellularized."[8]

While it is patently true that hundreds of millions of people still work in much the same way as in the industrial age (on assembly lines, in factories, for subsistence wages, without safety nets), it is also true that any and nearly all commodities (the iPhone, say) today rely on the integration of various moments of valorization: commodities are no longer paradigmatically objects with singular points of sale, but rather arrays of images (imaginaries) tethered to computable information and anchored to a distributed material system with multiple points of interface. The iPhone is a particularly good example, because even as the A-side of its screen is immersed in networks and clouds, the B-side depends on a network of labor practices that are effectively forms of enslavement.[9] Therefore, when considering informatic production in the world of the programmable image, think not just of Disney's organization of the imagination through franchises and product lines of *Frozen*, but also of the share pricing of Apple and Google with its tendrils in rare-earth mines, factory servitude, national and geo-politics and a rentier model of the general intellect. Thus we can see that early capital's generalized quantification and therefore digitization that renders nearly all human practices computable in industrialization but also, and emphatically, through colonialism, is the pre-history of the current moment. Like the ledgers of slave ships, the East India Company, and monopoly cartels, the metrics of dataveillance are precisely the metrics of valuation. They measure the very metabolism of a society organized by screens in a way that suggests that computational capital is also computational colonialism. These screens interface the dynamic data-visualizations of computational capital and convert the general population into content providers. They are also worksites—points where attention is required to valorize capital through the production of new information.

There is more to this formula and its functionality in the post-Fordist milieu defined by computational capital, but I do not want to repeat all of the main points of the M-I-C-I'-M' essay in which I try to formally demonstrate the viability of this formula. I'll just add here that fractal celebrity on social media (such as Instagram and Facebook), and the currencies of "likes" and the like, are one of the salient features of the ways in which we (as individuals, dividuals, cellularized intensities, whatever) are enjoined to wager in the programmable image to get ahead in the thoroughly financialized market of daily life that has become inseparable from sociality itself. We are programmed by images and we program with images, all the while generating data, that is, modifying code. Significantly different (but less so than one might think) from the plantation, this sense-/attention-/cognitive-/neural-/location-mediated modification of code is the

paradigmatic mechanism of value extraction today; it is the unhappy evolution of labor and the new expansive and all encompassing form of work in what Pasquinelli calls "the society of metadata."[10] As with the regime of labor and cinematic attention, there are some pleasures involved both in the process and as the result, but their distribution is profoundly unequal. The more than two billion dispossessed within this planet are both the condition and result of this regime. The instagram porn-star in Moscow or LA and the Syrian refugee struggling for survival are each overdetermined if not almost fully absorbed in the ambient semiosis that is part of the precarity of informatic financialization, but the benefits of this (partial) self empowerment via a struggle with info-servitude and computer mediated abstraction accrue unequally along the lines of a hierarchy of historically negotiated codes and codifications—including race, gender, nation, class, citizenship, etc.— that are among the vectors of what is increasingly algorithmic governance.

Here I will be committed to interrogating some of the new pathways from M-M', that is, the movements in an expression that Marx saw as capital's "concise style" in which money becomes more money. However, I will partly undertake this investigation into the production of interest by providing negative examples: I will focus on certain elaborations and ramifications of the relationship between image and code as a space of politicization and anti-capitalist praxis, rather than as a practice of capitalist valorization. Not in all cases considered here, but in many, the practice of resistance, refusal, *détournement*, or re-programming reveals the dominant while generating critique, counter-culture, and counter-history.

We have seen from recent history that among the myriad intervening subroutines in the movement from money to more money in capital, that is from M-M', is the financial derivative. The derivative, part of the contemporary era characterized by "financialization," is, as the late Randy Martin tells us, an economic formation that, by the general account, broke the economy in 2008, wantonly making "something out of nothing," and allowing "a greedy few [to take] advantage while regulators looked the other way."[11] Martin observed the following:

> While derivative principles have been applied in economic settings for thousands of years, albeit without the materiality or impact they presently exercise, their logic has a presence in many fields. Despite entering august dictionary listings and public discourse only in the past decade, derivatives actually have a long history and complex genealogy that incorporates meanings from law, medicine, geology, engineering, chemistry, music, calculus and grammar. In all these senses, derivatives are a transmission of some value from a source to something else, an attribute of that original expression that can be combined with like characteristics, a variable factor that can move in harmony or dissonance with others.[12]

The derivative emerges in modern finance as a risk management tool. For example, if a US based business enters into a contract to make a purchase six months from now for one million Euros, it can also purchase an option, that is, a contract, to buy Euros at a set price (say one million Euros at $1.10 per Euro) to hedge against the risk of a large price fluctuation that could make Euros more expensive. Such a contract offsets risk. In fact, it represents a stochastic relation to the market, a weighted bet on one set of results within a statistical range of outcomes. Thus it requires—and in fact is—a reading of market forces, including the psychology of all players, it is, in short a wager on the movement of the totality of the market regarding how market movements may affect the pricing of a particular commodity.

Understanding the instrumentality of this hedge or derivative as an endeavor to guarantee a return on investment allows us to see that advertising can be viewed as another instrument of risk management, one whose various forms, have, like those of the financial sector grown into an "industry." The comparative of these two entities is mutually revealing. Like the financial industry, the advertising industry makes the case to investors for its own legitimacy and productive potential.[13] It formalizes "social cooperation" and endeavors to leverage it for the benefit of its investors. Here however, the wager on market forces directly depends upon a formalized (and increasingly algorithmic) organization of the psyche and/or semiotics via the programmable image. Just as the various derivatives from commodity circulation open up spaces of transactions within a transaction (transactions which themselves can be bundled and sold), we can demonstrate that this logic of the derivative—itself a calculus of multiple transactions that reduces a process to a price (per eyeball, yes, but increasingly which eyeball?)—pertains specifically to image-function. These new "industries" have long troubled a Marxism that in large part was capable of only a rudimentary, quasi-Newtonian conception of the commodity-form and thus of productive labor—a form that, as I tried to indicate in "The Programmable Image," was itself a derivative though not fully understood as such. However, as early as 1977, in his famous "Blindspot" essay, Dallas Smythe recognized the productive role of audiences in the valorization of commodity pricing, and in making a case for the concept of "the audience commodity" by arguing that audiences do the work of learning to consume, introduced a networked model of valorization that factored in the productive value of tapping psychology, perception, desire, imagination, and the like—the very stuff of what I endeavored to describe as the basis of the attention theory of value through an expansion of Marx's notion of sensuous labor.[14] The effort was to conceptualize what was transacted (and indeed produced) in the network. It was a theorization of the evolving logistics of the market—always already a network, even if not conceptualized as such. The comparison of these two "industries" reveals that risk management techniques account for the vagaries of subjective actors and inter-subjective social dynamics by creating a spread. They are price indexes of volatility, calculi of capture networked via screens.

The Photograph as Image and Code

As already indicated, the technical and computational elaboration of the networked screen/image as a means of production and value extraction is, from a technical point of view, the paradigmatic adventure of post-Fordist capitalism, the cutting edge of computational capital. Social media sights, with their constant circulation of images and the metrics they develop to evaluate such circulation, are part of the command-control operations that organize social production and reproduction—sociality—more generally. But rather than reviewing the productive dimensions of visuality here (the labor of looking, the attention theory of value, neuropower), that increasingly can be understood to traverse sensuality, speculation, and social praxis, let's consider a particularly critical and brilliant approach to image production, indeed, one could say *image-production*: that of Ariella Azoulay. Though not focused on digitality, in books such as *The Civil Contract of Photography* and *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography*, Azoulay undertakes a radical reconceptualization of photography and its various programs. A consideration of her revision of the significance of photography, will, in the context of a discussion of what I think of as the worksite of the image, serve to illustrate some of the productive stakes, implicit in photography's multiple derivatives. Azoulay's reconceptualization of the ontology of photography, disrupts received notions regarding the contract of photography and reveals that reigning conceptions of the photograph (its authenticity/truth, the sovereignty of the photographer, the abiding distinction between "art" photography and "political" photography) secure social relations by normalizing

certain forms of agency and excluding other forms in ways that renders society predictable. The extant conventions of and around photography, are correlated with regimes of citizenship, state power, and importantly, forms of exclusion, as if the institutionalization of photography (its commonsensical understandings) were itself a mode of risk management working in the service of the *status quo* of state power.[15]

Rather than indicating a violence *inherent in* the received form of the photographic apparatus as I myself felt compelled to do in a too brief study of photography as a racial formation,[16] Azoulay reframes the ontology of the photographic medium as "the *political* ontology of photography." In contradistinction to theorists such as André Bazin or Roland Barthes, who understood photography first and foremost as a branch of chemistry, she understands photography as fundamentally a social relation—one in which there are many stakeholders. Whether one is in front of the lens, is behind the lens, is before the image, is a purveyor of the image, has access to the image, is denied access, is represented, is unrepresented, has moved into the space where the image was made, or has been forced out, etc., one may be a stakeholder in the meaning and usage of an image. This notion of the photograph as distributed social relation is quite different from Barthes' notion that the distinctive feature of the photograph, its "essence," is a relation to the Real —its "that has been-ness." But as even Barthes intuited, albeit by means of a naturalistic ontology positing chemistry at the origins of the photograph, the received notions that organize the practice of photography and its allied perceptions (visible in what Barthes called "the *studium*"), are hedges against the risk that photography itself represents. The precarity of the photographic rules of perception were also obvious to Barthes. As is well known, the semiotician writing under the staggering weight of the loss of his mother while considering a photograph of her, made his apologia in *Camera Lucida* for the limitations imposed by semiotics itself: for Barthes the photograph contained within itself the possibility for the violation and indeed the explosion of extant semiotic codes, opening out through the chemical fixity of a "that has been" to what he glimpsed as the "madness" of the Real. [17]

Azoulay too understands that received interpretive codes and the institutions that maintain them organize photography in a way that produces and reproduces the status quo. By dilating the event of photography well beyond the presence or absence of the snapshot, and introducing what she calls "the civil contract of photography," Azoulay, in an admittedly utopian (but nonetheless political) vein, is able to posit a "citizenry of photography" whose inclusivity of those who may have a stake in the image surpasses not only the received notions of what photography is but also the inclusivity of the contemporary nation state—as the nation state imposes a distinction between citizen and non-citizen while adjudicating over them both.[18] The photograph would open to a discursive space in which anyone might respond. Drawing upon photographs of Palestine and of Palestinians—both taken and not taken, visible and invisible—as her archive, she gives amplitude and voice to the many perspectives and consequences of the various photographic events and events of photography embroiled in the fraught history of Palestine, Israel, and indeed of the modern world, in a way that allows the entrance of Palestinian perspectives, histories, and claims into an archive that might otherwise exclude them and in practice does exclude them. And it needs to be said that she makes this case in a national and often international context that systematically excludes Palestinian claims on life and uses this exclusion as a justification of further violence.

Importantly for Azoulay, who has been both curator and critic, Palestine has become not simply an open-air prison as is widely recognized, but an "open studio" for the purveyance of images of "regime-made disaster." Azoulay's embedding of the photographic event in social relations profoundly affects the kinds of statements that can be made about

photography and begins to reveal not just the complicity but indeed the support that conventional notions of photography lend to apartheid regimes. Her work endeavors to open the archive to political claims to representation, history, and justice in order to create broad-based anti-colonial solidarity in response to instances of violence pushed to the margins, remaindered, or invisiblized by photographic conventions, while also holding out, in this case to Israeli citizens, what she calls the possibility of "the right not to be a perpetrator."[19] This latter is something nearly impossible for Israeli citizens to exercise currently. In short, in her work, images along with the praxes and discourses they engender, become the worksites of culture and struggle, rather than things necessarily and in many ways unconsciously consumed in accord with conventions and habits complicit with state violence. However, her displacement of these conventions (conventions which by virtue of their entrenchment have naturalized around photography both a set of practices and a metaphysics), illustrates how productive their normative functions are both to state power and racial formations.

In dilating the photographic event and opening it to many (Palestinian, anti-colonial, anti-fascist) stakeholders beyond the photographer, the museum, the newspaper, and those represented in the image, Azoulay reveals the political ontology of photography and grasps that ontological condition as a distributed social relation. In changing the types of statements one can make about the photograph, that is, in altering the discursive field around photography away from what is, for the enfranchised, a comfortingly un/de-contextualized context of a photograph, and away again from sovereignty of a photographer's intent or artistry, or a procustean distinction between politics and art, we could see Azoulay as providing a kind of counter-praxis to Paolo Virno's virtuosity, slated, here, around photography, that ordinarily, in conforming to statist interpretation and usage of a photograph would also conform to the exigencies of capitalized state power and of capital, along with their productive pre-scripting of discourse.[20] Thus, Azoulay's renegotiation of the ontology of photography is a strategy of semio-war; her disruption of the very notion of photography disrupts its scripts: the ways in which we participate in its practices and institutions, as well as its programs. It is therefore a retaking of cognitive-linguistic capacities that ordinarily are organized by the photographic programs that are part and parcel of the oppressive racial capitalist state.

To launch her reconceptualization of the embedded and distributed character of a photograph, whose meaning is "never-ending," Azoulay insists upon a shift from the paradigm of art (with its canons, geniuses, and exemplary images and its isolation from the "*too* political") to the paradigm of visual culture. We confront the fact that the vast institutionalization of photographic practices, from gallery curation, aesthetic evaluation, and captioning, to ideas about the role of photographer, critic, viewer, and the metaphysics of the image, etc., not only bear the signature of a statist imaginary, but reinforce state-power, its models of agency, civility, adjudication, jurisdiction, and epistemology, along with its presumed right to violence, the encampment of populations, militarization, incarceration, apartheid, and the rest of the necropolitical imaginary. In deterritorializing the paradigm of art and its cultic models of authority with that of visual culture and its sense of distributed participation, we may observe here that with the displacement of the hegemony of the single image or unitary voice by the churn of a distributed media ecology, it would not be wrong to glean also that the practices of social media are implicit in Azoulay's reconceptualization of photography.[21] It is therefore important here to recognize that the dilation of the photographic event as image in mediological process has a dialectical relation to code—not now simply as "natural language" or "semiotic convention" but as "computational language." The recoding of the image, the effort to restructure its processing in ways that do not conform to those organized by the hegemony of the state, of capital, of advertising, can be seen as providing

the means to intervene not only in state power, but in semiotic and thus also computational and financial codification: Code. Before platform fetishists object, I hasten to remind readers that precisely these negotiations of image and word feed all types of computation: from word processors, booksales, Twitter feeds, tech-startups, and platform innovation, to military simulations, the arms industry, stock markets, banks, and states. Semio-capitalism places the generation of meaning and financialization in the same domain. Indeed, as I want to suggest, Azoulay's view of the photographic event as "never ending" draws paradigmatically upon the distributed exchanges that take place in social media: she offers a theory that presupposes the complex relation between image, sign, and number, one that might help us to recognize that the anatomy of social media is indeed the key to the anatomy of photography. As we saw previously with the commodified object, few of its derivative functions were accessible or actionable in the earlier form, but they were latent or immanent as philosophers might say. The photograph (taken or not) was always-already a node in a network of indeterminate specifications. With the photograph then, an intervention in the vectoralized movement of I-C-I' that would preclude the production of an I' within a certain range of statistically predictable parameters held in place by Zionism, settler colonialism, military industrial power, vertical financial integration and the art world, is also an interruption of the circuit M-M'. It is a break in the program of capital, a disruption of data-flow, a crisis of valorization, a hack.

Worksites of the Digital-Visual

In the latest instance of financialization, life (whatever that is) wriggles under an emergently totalizing field of informatics—all communication, all knowing, becomes inseparable from image and code. The expanded field of operations under the domain of the logistics of the screen/image, which places perception and discourse in a feedback loop with capitalized machinery and makes these subject to algorithmic governance clearly extends to the cinema—indeed cinema was a kind of first instance where the dynamics of what was to come became discernible. I would agree with Patricia Pisters, who notes the omnipresence and variety of screens:

> In spite of all the capturing forces that operate on our multiple screens, it is possible to see the media as a gigantic network of baroque perspectives where particular points of view and the psychological effects they entail become affectively entangled. We can say that in the new logistics we are not [(only)] passive spectators captured by institutional or ideological power even though these are still powers that need to be taken into account.[22]

Pisters calls for an active, agential relation to the multiplicity of images traversing the socius. In the media-environment, "Our real and virtual bodies are involved in complex ways that cannot be translated into simple ethical rules; we need instead an affective openness to be brought to the idea of cinema and (into) the world itself. By creating images, or simply by being affected by these images, we can participate in bringing reality and feeling back to the vortex of our multiple screens."[23] Emphasizing these fault-lines at the interface just a bit, we might observe that in the context of Berardi's "semio-capitalism," we are, in the extended field of the image, engaged in Pasquinelli's "immaterial civil war."[24] In the struggle over meaning and codification, day-to-day living becomes a kind of full-body, low-intensity semio-war—low-intensity, that is, for the privileged/lucky. But whether the struggle is for a few more likes on an Instagram account, dodging a drone strike, or avoiding the fallout of a sovereign debt crisis, an ethnic cleansing, or a genocide, somewhere, the stakes are life itself.

Rather than dealing here with the more familiar, yet suddenly far more interesting and relevant question of cinema (as program, what I call the cinematic program) and the

aesthetic (as interface), or the equally interesting question of what Hito Steyerl calls "the poor image," I would like to focus on less familiar worksites of the digital-visual.[25] Before turning to these new frontiers, we note in passing that the narratological, psycho-sexual, spatial, racial, ideological, visceral, and affective are now all also and, within this matrix, always, vectors of attentional production and digitization. Additionally, the new modes of negotiating screen/image-space, discussed below, via the reorganization of attentional, sensory, and neuronal practices coupled directly to computer programming have given rise to new forms of life.[26]

One example from the more sinister and austere side of navigating the logistics of visualization is CV Dazzle (http://cvdazzle.com) or Computer Vision Dazzle Camouflage. Designer Adam Harvey explains:

> It is a form of expressive interference that combines makeup and hair styling (or other modifications) with face-detection thwarting designs. The name is derived from a type of camouflage used during WWI, called Dazzle, which was used to break apart the gestalt-image of warships, making it hard to discern their directionality, size, and orientation. Likewise, the goal of CV Dazzle is to break apart the gestalt of a face, or object, and make it undetectable to computer vision algorithms, in particular face detection.[27]

Harvey has also developed an anti-drone wear line.

What is noteworthy is that the negotiation of visual appearance is organized by the endeavor to elude the algorithmic detection mechanisms of code. While the "look" generated by these forms of life is visible and affecting in the social domain, the operative frame of reference is the computational algorithm and its apophenic discernment. Thus the reference domain of the machine-mediated computational process—its ability to discern patterns—is the practical target of these wearable interventions in the becoming normal of always everywhere ambient computation. Here too, as with the example of Azoulay, the resistance practice also illuminates the dynamics of normative functioning of a ubiquitous computational surveillance or omniveillance, that, as Edward Snowden and Laura Poitras irrefutably revealed tends toward anyone-anytime-anywhere geo-location and identification. The Hollerith punch card, used in the early national censuses and the Nazi holocaust, has come a long way indeed. Today, cell phones have already rendered many of our movements fully computable, potentially providing not just details of where you are when, but of income, residence, citizenship, spending habits, sexual preference, criminal record, etc. Soon, with the rapid acceleration of machine learning and neural networks, just your face will do all that and more. As the work of managing your face (location, expression, composure, affect) increasingly pushes networked discrete state machines (now to be thought of as The World Computer) into new states, the two meanings of "profile" will converge, pushing the interface back into your face. From a surveillance standpoint, your face will be the interface. Or rather, it will be *an* interface, since ambient, ubiquitous computing and the internet of things will provide multiple overlays for all varieties of targeting.[28]

The reparsing of the informatics of images (of viewing the image as fundamentally composed of information) is also bringing about a reconceptualization and reprogramming of photographic image-capture at the computational level. As it turns out, a tremendous amount of information is lost in the classical projection of images by conventional optics. Rather than creating a limited projection with a single focal plane, as with the classical optical camera projecting light onto an emulsion plate, light field cameras (such as Lytro), use digital sensors "to capture all the light" (all rays of light traveling in space at every point) and thus to capture its directional information. This

apparatus moves image capture into the explicitly computational domain. Images can be refocused after the fact in a kind of reverse rendering such that any given image can be refocused at any plane in the field merely by indicating a focal point on that plane with a finger or a mouse and recalibrating the depth of field.[29]

The realization that there is a tremendous amount of information in the light field and that much of it is lost was also the theme of a paper presented by Andreas Velten at a symposium called, in homage to Vilém Flusser, "The Photographic Universe" held in 2013 at The New School in New York City. Velten demonstrated a superfast camera that could slice light input up into nano-second frames such that one could actually image a light pulse traversing the surface of a tomato. These images, sequenced as a video composed of nano-second time slices showed that the tomato itself became a light source through quantum absorption; it absorbed part of the light pulse and then emitted light after the initial pulse had passed and faded back into darkness. Light emission can be treated not just as visible light, but as computable information. Such computability is precisely the treatment of light in another project also being developed by Velten and colleagues to build a camera that can see around corners. By doing the math, it is possible to track scattered light in order to resolve an occluded object, a man for example, out of the line of sight around the corner of a building and therefore invisible to the eye or ordinary image-rendering technologies. By effectively treating all surfaces as variants of mirrors, and processing the scattered light vectors and focusing them back into the occluded space one resolves an image of the man around the corner. Computational reconstruction of light scatter allows for a data visualization that creates an image of a figure ordinarily occluded by the function of conventional optics. Velten's admission that this project is funded by the section of the Pentagon known as DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) clearly indicates the instrumentality here. Although the presenter took the position that computational photography was all about the science, it is noteworthy that of all possible funders, it seems that the US military is most willing to invest big money in the opportunity to see around corners. Indeed, as with our reading of Azoulay's work, computational photography makes it clear to us that images "themselves" are all about *modes* of data-visualization, and that furthermore, data visualization is always instrumental—even if, as an archive, data, and the images it generates, may be open to multiple interpretations. These technologies expand both the archive of the visual and the number of semio-technical worksites—introducing new functions and interfaces with the domain of conventional operations. They become instruments of production and political programs. The effort to program and reprogram these worksights are also efforts to organize the production and reproduction of social life. So, emphatically now: A political ontology not just of photography but of images, semiotics, and code.

Two examples show the further ramification of the life-world by computerized vision along the pathways of valorization prescribed by capitalist hegemony. The first is two DARPA programs which effectively turn biotic components (aspects of the human sensorium) into the prosthetic extension of algorithmic processes. These algorithmic processes are of course developed for and by the securocratic state. Such ramifications represent the new technics of internal colonization in that they fragment and operationalize aspects of the sensorium. Human eyes and neuronal pathways become sensors for computational functions that can parse the inputs to recognize an "enemy" before a soldier consciously perceives one, or analyze at the speed of light the psychic response of a suspect under interrogation. Here the priority of image and user is fully reversed as the human sensorium becomes an input device for the command-control function of computation while the human body becomes an algorithm's avatar. This marks an advance of sorts over Norbert Weiner's observation that with cybernetics "low level discrimination" will be left to a machine, since here it is the humans that provide the low-

level discrimination, while the machine makes the higher level synthesis and presumably is the one that issues the instruction to fire an attack.

The second example is a *New York Times* photograph from a story [30] describing a collaboration between German car manufacturer Audi and an Israeli tech start up, which provides evidence for the kinds of gains possible for corporations and states when computerized vision takes over steerage (the original meaning of *kubernetis*, "the art of steering," and the Greek root of cybernetics). Not only is automobile transportation taken over by the computer automated control of vision, but it seems that the critical function of vision is as well, since here at least, in the *New York Times* coverage of the driverless car, the vehicle is shown next to an apartheid border fence without comment. A better headline for the story might be "Israel Automates its Vision and Drives using German Technologies," though no doubt the gallows humor would be lost on many readers, who unbeknownst to them, perhaps, have already had much of their own vision and drive outsourced to automation. The technics of computational colonialism organize both territory and spectator with their steerage and drive.[31]

If what Flusser calls "the universe of technical images"—in which cameras organize the world for their own advancement—results in what Wendy Chun deftly names "programmed visions" we begin to get a sense of the fundamental organizing system of computational capital.[32] Chun's phrase and her ground-breaking book of the same name complicate the seemingly clear distinction between image and code. Similar to Chun's argument about software, which is, in brief, that it is ultimately inseparable from the media-environment in which it functions and therefore has no rigid border or discrete being (software is not just a metaphor, but a metaphor of a metaphor as she says—and machines "leak"), we must proceed with the working hypothesis that there is no longer any tenable strict distinction (non-dialectical, essential, or ontological) between image and code.[33] "Image" and "code" designate moments in a process, just as "money" designates a user-interface for the value form. Thus I-C-I' in the formula M-I-C-I'-M', like the commodity "C" before it in M-C-M', is also a hypostatization—a moment in flux. I-C-I' is really I-C-C'-I': The definitive formula for the circuit from M to M' is M-I-C-C'-I'-M', where it is understood that the instances marked by the variables are themselves moments in a flux—technically mediated forms of hypostasis.

Just as Flusser's example of a shoe as being an expression of information only became understandable as information, that is, only *became* "information" after the rise of informatics, the image—and by this we mean any image: a Renaissance painting, a printed page, a retinal scan—is now understandable in terms of codes because it is grasped through the matrix of code. This is a practical as well as conceptual matter. The screen/image is not finally separable from the code that renders it, nor, ultimately is the current organization of visuality. The *Mona Lisa*, either in the Louvre or on your screen, is no longer just a painting, it is a node in a vast informatic network—as are "you."

The proliferation of computerized vision machines tends to function by automating vision in ways that confirm Flusser's early insights that humans had become functionaries of the camera. As functionaries of the photographic apparatus, humans for Flusser became subject to constant feedback through the multiple feedback loops between social practices of all sorts and technical images—the significant surfaces resultant from the program of the camera.[34] Given the dominance of images in all social endeavors, the full digitization of images—their subsumption under the regimen of capitalist informatics—indicates that computational production on the digital treadmill becomes the general form of productive activity in the interval between M-M'. Through our negotiation of images (attentive, distracted, psycho/neurological, semiotic, metabolic, unconscious, etc.), we tend the code, which is to say, that in an ironic return to Chun's analysis of early

computing at ENIAC where women were the first computers, we too are the computers—the feminized supplement.[35] Put another way, they are also "us." Indeed Flusser's astonishing work on photography was only possible because he was among the first to see clearly that an emergent computational logic was already at work in the photographic apparatus, as if, in an extension of Marx's fragment on machines, cameras converted persons to conscious organs in the vast automaton of photography. As "functionaries" of the photographic apparatus, we have already been processed by its computational logic, which is to say, our words and our time have been cut up, we have internalized its codes, our relation to reality has become magical, and what we are is part of its expression. As "functionaries" in "the universe of technical images," we compose ourselves in a mise-en-scène of computation-production in order to engage in computation-production. To quell (or exacerbate) any lingering doubts regarding this claim, simply open your Facebook or Instagram. Or look around. Most of what we see, what we process, what we do now is informatic labor for computational capital in the computational mode of production. This real abstraction from the life-world is precisely the metabolic processes of the social undergoing monetization in a dissymetrical relation to capital accumulation. Among the results is Stiegler's proletarianization of the senses.[36]

It is an awareness of such macro-political-economic meta-programs that allows us to raise the most serious questions about the function of automating machine vision and data visualization. This process goes deep. It involves not only the automation of sovereignty by machine protocols, but the sedimentation of historically-produced social difference in machine architectures. Programs are not only networked to one another but nested within one another. Here, as Tara McPherson has lucidly pointed out, actually existing computation cannot be thought separately from contemporary racialization.[37] In a discussion of UNIX, the ground-breaking operating system developed by Ken Thompson at Bell Labs, McPherson shows that the history of UNIX reveals that the push for increased modularity, which involved the compartmentalization of tasks, the connectivity of these various modules through "pipes", and the creation of higher levels of programming that can nest these modules in blocks (such that today an imovie user needs to know nothing about binary code) overlapped first with the racial logic of segregation, and then with that of neo-liberalism, which "hides its racial 'kernel,' burying" modular separation "below a shell of neoliberal pluralism."[38] McPherson argues that "across several registers, the emerging neo-liberal state begins to adopt "the rule of modularity," in order to separate and contain allied antagonists.[39]

Regarding compartmentalization of computational tasks alongside segregation, and then the burying of these forms of separation under user-friendly formats dependent upon the rule of modularity, McPherson writes, "the emergence of covert racism and its rhetoric of colorblindness are not so much intentional as systemic. Computation is the primary delivery method of these new systems, and it seems at best naïve to imagine that cultural and computational operating systems don't mutually infect one another."[40] With respect to the visual turn, she argues

> I would argue that to study image, narrative and visuality will never be enough if we do not engage as well the non-visual dimensions of code and their organization of the world. And yet, to trouble my own polemic, we might also understand the workings of code to have already internalized the visual to the extent that, in the heart of the labs from which UNIX emerged, the cultural processing of the visual via the register of race was already at work in the machine.[41]

This admirable bit of dialectics accords with my own view that modern media platforms are themselves racial formations. The recursivity of sociality, visuality, and codification means that logics of racialization and gender formation are sedimented and functionalized in machines. The denial of this thesis through the assertion of technical emergence as a product of a/non-political (objective) science ontologically grounded in the sublime neutrality of mathematics—a position either assumed or asserted outright by so many tech boosters—would perform a kind of platform fetishism. Platform fetishism, not only reifies a formation by imposing ideological boundaries, it occludes the history of platform emergence by affirming a maternal bond with presumably racially unmarked technologies and unproblematically transcendental modes of knowing—all the while disavowing the historical embeddedness of technical form: the dialectic between technical form and social becoming, the *historicity* of form. That the free-flowing sovereignty of neo-liberal subjects of capital is founded upon modularity, containerization, sequestration—walls of all kinds—is undeniably consistent with the practices of slavery and coloniality. It demands further thought. For as is again and again demonstrated, the racism of neo-liberalism is but one small step away from the full blown fascism of Trump—and we should take careful note that for its most aggrieved victims, the difference is non-existent.

Productive life activity today passes through the constant transformation of code and its platforms (a distinction that while still useful is, as noted, difficult to maintain) in the ordination of value. Indeed a Facebook "like"—an Orwellian reduction of Old Speak vocabulary if there ever was one—was recently given a dollar value: $174.17.[42] That was in 2014. Facebook recently introduced a few more options to make user's desires more visible to advertisers. The mere touch of a pad/screen introduces a change in functionality that engenders new access, connections, and information…for corporations above all. New metrics of "value capture" are everywhere.[43] Xbox One Kinect's sensor can now determine whether you and other users watch the commercials displayed; reward systems are being devised by Microsoft to pay users for their interactivity. Samsung was working on a phone that stops video display until users are looking at the screen, making it impossible to turn away during commercials and still get to your content.[44]

But in the dynamic coordination of centripetal and centrifugal forces from M-M' there is plenty of dissent, alternative wagers within the technical image. Laurel Ptak's Wages for Facebook project embraces what we have now known for sometime: that *we* are the producers of internet platforms—and that as private entities these platforms represent massive expropriations.[45]

Andrew Norman Wilson, formerly at Google and fired for making videos of declassed workers leaving the Googleplex in Mountain View California poses another challenge to the apparently seamless, because invisible, absorption of labor by screens/images. It appears that the very fact that he tried to develop another kind of visual relation to workers whose population was composed primarily of poor minorities, who were denied access to Google's cafes and other perks reserved for white-collar employees, and who received different work schedule than these "regular" Google employees to prevent interaction at closing, was enough to get him fired. These were the book scanners. Ironic that he got fired from Google for producing too much information. Wilson also retrieved rejected images of scanned books, errata that bear the traces of the condom clad fingers of workers, as a new kind of documentary evidence of the presence of people amidst the data—people who are ordinarily disappeared within it.



Scanned book image rejected by Google. (Photo: Andrew Norman Wilson (2012) "The Inland Printer – 164" Inkjet print on rag paper, painted frame, aluminum composite material)

But while I fully embrace and desire to extend the revolutionary and insurrectionary energies percolating through the code, I do not want to end on a note of false hope. The technology underpinning today's very anti-social social-media, has also given rise to media that operate covertly and do not lend themselves to visualizations that can be easily addressed.[46] If computers have led to social-media and financialization, then financialization has also led to anti-social media and computation. Here we are talking about plutocratic corporations working with states, but also interstate virtuosic coordination as revealed by Wikileaks and large scale, privacy-scraping data-harvesting not only by the various Googles, but by security states and their NSAs—which directly or indirectly posit the socio-semiotic metabolism itself as expropriable labor by assigning it a price paid by indebted or otherwise bonded taxpayers and the surveilled. Google's conflict with the NSA over "our" privacy is a proprietary war between giants over who would own our subjectivity, our neuronal function—our capacity to produce "valorizing information."

In revealing the intensifying media-technics from M-M', an image like the following made by Erik Hunsader is particularly instructive:

"10 miliseconds of trading in Merk" is a 6' and 54" video that shows the dynamism of algorithmic stock trading during 1/100th of a second, an amount of time, which, by the way, is not adequate time for the first Merk quote shown in the video to travel at the speed of light from a New York exchange to a London exchange before the video ends.[47] Even though time is slowed by a factor of 40,000 here, the transactions are difficult for the eye to track, let alone account for. And this is traffic in just one stock. The number of transactions taking place at speeds that are effectively that of light illustrates that computation, communication, and financial speculation have become one and the same movement. These integrated functions operate algorithmically and do not lend themselves to real-time actionable images; thus they effectively short-circuit the visual interface. Never mind that the image, as Barthes and many others recognized in one way or another, was already a short-circuit with respect to modes of communication based on "natural language." Here we find machine cognition cutting linguistic and visual cognition out of the circuit entirely for billions of consecutive machine cycles. This is mechanized, or rather computerized "attention," exactly what Norbert Weiner called "low-level discrimination" but now capable of executing algorithm-based "decisions" at the speed of light. Nonetheless, and though some have been tempted to say that the visual is no longer paramount, these lightning fast computerized trades are imaged in the biological or human-readable time of the balance sheets of traders, who use those results to buy their cars, their art, and whatever other semiotic mirrors they require to make it worth their while to rework the programming and keep up with the Joneses. Though it is becoming difficult to say whether it is the algorithmic trading that is the real content of the trader's self image, or if it is the trader's self image that is the real content of the trade, Marshall McLuhan's notion that the content of a medium is another medium still holds. It is perhaps necessary to mention that human labor or what Neferti Tadiar calls "life-time" is the content of both.[48] As if in affirmation of Virilio's thesis in *Speed and Politics*, we see that outpacing conventional constraints on space-time is a means to wield power within conventional space-time.[49] Here the lightning fast shuffle of proprietary entitlements (ownership) outflanks the psyche of the market and most of its content providers, capturing value whose predominant scene of production is elsewhere.

Working for the Blockchain

Obviously the list of new pathways from M-M' capable of capturing socio-subjective activity might be extended infinitely, but I will not attempt to do so here. In closing it is worth gesturing towards Bitcoin and cryptocurrency as a significant development of the relationship between computation and the socius. Bitcoin is a directly monetizing social medium. As has been said, it signals the emergence of the internet of money. Arguably,

money has always been social media—an encryption of social relations, a platform that sheered off ungainly and difficult-to-abstract stuff like qualities and history in the practice of its own digital rationale, while simultaneously creating its own mechanisms of storage, retrieval, circulation and account.[50] Historically, subjective activity was encrypted in commodities that were themselves encrypted by the value-form—this encryption was in fact the very condition of wage-labor and capital. Money in its various determinations, as store of value, as medium of exchange, and as capital, is currently being abstracted as user interface, platform, and operating system. Cryptocurrencies avail themselves of the fact that money is inexorably a social and a computational relationship, and exploit the possibility of developing a proprietary relation to the encryption process itself. With Bitcoin, this is done by mathematically formalizing every transaction and inscribing it into a permanent distributed public record known as the blockchain. The encryption process is abstracted out from the social and rendered computational. It then sets people to work supporting the machines. Everyone who owns bitcoin is also a shareholder in the bitcoin blockchain, which is to say, the entire Bitcoin system. The encryption process, which requires both subjective and fixed capital investment, includes the instantiation of monetary units as well as organizing their circulation, storage, and sites of exchange. As the six year history of Bitcoin attests, this cryptographic endeavor, which solves the double-spend problem by creating a permanent ledger of each computational instantiation, is also an exploit of the monetary practices and sensibilities of the current conjuncture. First only visionaries, fanatics, libertarians, those who had to send overseas remittances, and citizens of failing states were interested, but now banks and states are also expressing interest—which is to say investing their own capital—in blockchain technology.

Admittedly the absorption of computational capital by a (globally distributed) discrete state machine potentially has increased utility, higher resolution, and greater stability than earlier forms of money. Here the stability and inexorability of distributed machine-mediated computation takes over the function of the state in securing the currency and eliminates the third party guarantor/beneficiary of the bank. But in spite of the real possibility of a Benjaminian work-of-art type of reading (Walter, not Franklin) with regard to the democratizing potentials of the distributed, immutable public ledger that is the non-state-based blockchain, Bitcoin, though anti-state, is not anti-capitalist and can likely be no more democratic than its predecessor monetary systems. This discussion could prove to be a long one, so I will simply state that, much as I would like to be proved wrong here, bitcoin appears to be a new type of anti-social social-media in as much as early adopters speculate on the increasing value (M-M') of a system that converts speculation, human zeal and computational energy (as of 2015 the bitcoin system directly uses more that $150,000 of energy per day), into a monetary platform in which the monetary units themselves are also shares in the overall value of the platform. This share in the platform, we should note, is also true with other currencies except for the fact that their platforms are capitalist states—national economies and all the opacity, militarism, and anti-democratic centralization that is implied by that term. Bitcoin is anti-state because its value is not "guaranteed" by a government, as in fiat currencies, but by the collective (machine-mediated) perception of and participation in its utility as money. As it is not backed by gold or a state but is rather mathematically secured proprietary access to a publicly encrypted social relation, it suggests an increasing convergence of capitalization and computational sovereignty. The often vague perception of this convergence, in which government by the many (computers) will take over state functions and agency will be enacted from the margins of distributed platform sovereignty, constitutes a large part of the discursive excitement and therefore of the general development surrounding this

technology: as investors and enthusiasts say, buying bitcoin (limited to 23,000,000 coins each divisible into 100,000,000 units) is like getting in on the ground floor of the internet.

At this writing, the most recent notable development in cryptocurrency is Ethereum. Its inventors and adherents stake Ether (its unit of value) as programmable money, different from Bitcoin in that while it is blockchain based, it is fully programmable or "Turing complete." (See ethereum.org for more details.) It claims to offer the possibility of "trust-free contracts" that would "disintermediate" the banks (destroy them) and the creation of autonomous entities that could own themselves: to give a favorite example, a driverless car that services passengers and sees to its own fuel and repairs with the money it makes. More than likely though, rather than one car doing well and purchasing millions of other cars to become king of the road, the result will be that the car will yield "its" profits to its programmers/owners via an organization that is currently being called a DAO (Distributed Autonomous Corporation)—unless, of course, someone figures out how to program the car to return its profits to the *socius*. Here again, we see how even the need to get from point A to point B modifies code and is converted by screen-mediated ubiquitous computation into value-productive activity by spurring programmers and investors to create automatons that will harvest such needs in perpetuity: the very acting on a socially-produced need is slated for capture and monetization. We also see that a technocratic transformation, even one that erodes state power, will by itself be inadequate to political revolution.

Both program and archive, as money, commodity, screen-image, interface, derivative, and data visualization, cryptocurrency is thus far an exploit that churns and swarms in, through, and as our money, our code, our images, our words. In this respect it is paradigmatic—shifting the computational ecology and infiltrating it by introducing new levels of functionality and absorption to the already existing world-historical program of computational capital. As exhibit A of what is being called "the programmable economy," Bitcoin, and the blockchain technology on which it is built, was perhaps the paradigmatic incarnation of computational capital. Ethereum, which is developing partnerships with Microsoft and numerous banks, as well as spurring a whole new spate of start-ups, today takes computational capital to the next level with "programmable money." As the cryptocurrency exploits the intimate, we inhabit a media-environment where capital circulation is grasped and abstracted as encryption and data visualization, and can therefore be consciously developed as production via the extraction of informatic labor from historically produced needs. But as it turns out, on a planet that has been completely transformed by computational finance, computational colonialism, and the programmable image, everything else in circulation may have its informatic vectors, its media, its enumeration, including History's dispossessions, enslavements, genocides, and massive accumulations of violence, violation, and presently innumerable sufferings. Despite the hostile, rampant practices of dismediation, perhaps everything that ever was leaves its informatic trace. Today we must ask: What are the anti-capitalist data-visualizations to which we might affix our energies? What non- and anti-capitalist resources remain ambient?

What new programs might we engender? And how? Down and off-the-grid as we may be, I am not convinced that we can do without some programs. Or without computers—they too are our history, and our history is complex. The answers here are myriad and indeed already in the making. In a Gramscian mode, we might predict that in many useful cases we will link the programmatic with the poetic in wagers of shared sensibility and historical (re-)affiliation ventured against the multiple forms of deferred justice and widespread, ongoing violence.

Notes

1. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schoken Books, 1969), 241.
2. Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (2004): 117-139.
3. See anarchiveofourown.org, "a fan-created, fan-run, non-profit, non-commercial archive for transformative fanworks, like fanfiction, fanart, fan videos, and podfic." See also, Allen Feldman, *Archives of the Insensible: Of War, Photopolitics and Dead Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).
4. On Romano Alquati, see Matteo Pasquinelli, "Italian Operaismo and the Information Machine," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 32, no. 3 (2015): 49-68.
5. Jonathan Beller, "The Programmable Image of Capital: M-I-C-I'-M' and the World Computer," *Postmodern Culture* (forthcoming Fall 2016).
6. Jonathan Beller, *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle* (Lebanon, NH: Dartmouth and University Press of New England, 2006).
7. See Sean Cubitt, "Decolononizing Ecomedia," *Cultural Politics* 10, no.3 (2014): 275-286, and "Integral Waste," *Theory, Culture and Society* 32, no. 4 (2014). Cubitt brilliantly argues that "the environment" as an idea is itself the result of the economic "externalities" of the accounting systems of capitalism and colonialism—it is the supposedly extrinsic space of capital (the colonies, "nature") where it can freely dump its waste, including the energetic and toxic waste of computational processes.
8. Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *After the Future* eds. Gary Genosko and Nicholas Thoburn (Baltimore, MA: AK Press, 2011), 35.
9. The working conditions at Foxconn factories are fairly well known, but mining conditions for tin and coltan in Congo are less well documented, as is the emergence of this brutal rare-earth industry in the footprint of rubber plantations. For more see Kevin Bales, *Blood and Earth: Modern Slavery, Ecocide, and the Secret to Saving the World* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2016). For an excerpt from the text, see Kevin Bales, "Your Phone Was Made By Slaves: A Primer on the Secret Economy," January 2016, accessed May 1, 2016, https://blog.longreads.com/2016/03/08/your-phone-was-made-by-slaves-a-primer-on-the-secret-economy/.
10. Pasquinelli outlines three determinations of metadata: "*1. Metadata as the measure of the value of social relations….2. Metadata as implementation of machinic intelligence….3. Metadata as new form of biopolitical control (dataveillance).*" Pasquinelli, "Italian Operaismo," 63-64, emphasis in original.
11. Randy Martin, "After Economy: Social Logics of the Derivative," *Social Text* 31, no. 1 114 (Spring 2013): 85.
12. Martin, "After Economy," 85.
13. See my essay, "Advertisarial Relations and Aesthetics of Survival," *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies*, June 3, 2013, accessed May 1, 2016, http://www.necsus-ejms.org/advertisarial-relations-and-aesthetics-of-survival-advertising-advertisign/.
14. Dallas Smythe, "Communications: The Blindspot of Western Marxism," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1977): 1-27.
15. Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), and Ariella Azoulay, *Civilian Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (London: Verso, 2012).

16. Jonathan Beller, "Camera Obscura After All: The Racist Writing With Light," in "Feminist Media Theory:Iterations of Social Difference," ed. Jonathan Beller, special issue, *Scholar and Feminist Online* 10, no. 3, (Summer 2012), http://sfonline.barnard.edu/feminist-media-theory/camera-obscura-after-all-the-racist-writing-with-light/0/.
17. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980).
18. Azoulay, *Civilian Imagination*.
19. Ariella Azoulay, "'We,' Palestinians and Jewish Israelis: The Right Not to Be a Perpetrator," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 114, no. 3 (2015): 687-693.
20. Paulo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004).
21. Azoulay's inspirational polemic infuses her recent books and interrogates the organization of photographic practices by state- and bourgeois cultural-formations and what might be called their ideological apparatuses—apparatuses that organize the use and reception of images and therefore appear as part of the photographic program. She pursues a significant distinction between what she identifies as "the paradigm of art" and "the paradigm of visual culture," and boldly exposes the paradigm of art as a foreclosure of many of the radical potentialities of photography. The paradigm of art is 1) invested in a distinction between the aesthetic and the political, 2) configures a notion of sovereignty through the ideal of authorship, and 3) generates objects. Azoulay writes against the photograph as the aesthetic (or political) result of the sovereign subject photographer's exercise of his creative intention, or, for that matter as the mere objective product of a machine process. Instead, under the paradigm of visual culture, she sees the photograph and photography fully embedded in the complexities of sociality itself. Thus a photographic event becomes a site of negotiation—an open archive—in which many stakeholders might have a say about various aspects of an image's existence, or non-existence.
    For our purposes here we could say that the dilation of the photographic event, which Azoulay argues is "never-ending" lays bear the photographic image as a worksite—a complex, distributed, multi-pronged, semiotic process essential to the production and reproduction of the world as we know it. (Azoulay, *Civil Imagination*.) The worksite that is the image is thus also a battleground.

    Extrapolating from the centrality—or better perhaps, nodality—of the image we could say that in relation to images there is an imperative to perform, to virtuosity a la Paulo Virno, in as much as we mean a necessary adequation of the multiple relatations between images, language function and social life. See Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*. In accord with Virno, one aspect of this generalized virtuosity clearly involves what Virno calls, the expropriation of the cognitive-linguistic, and, not incidentally what Berardi recognizes as attention deficit disorder, and Steigler sees as endemic short-termism and the grammatization of the senses (These pathological impositions, I would want to point out since it is oft forgotten, require the emergence of what I have called world-media-system to obtain). See, Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*; Berardi, *After the Future*; and Bernard Stiegler, *For a New Critique of Political Economy* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Pres, 2010). However,

Azoulay's embattled stance, and the massive efforts towards decolonization and anti-apartheid systems more generally, suggest that as quickly as avenues of practical activity are closed off (through expropriation and foreclosure) other scenes of struggle emerge. The subordination, subjugation, and subsumption of linguistic function under the image is always only partial and incomplete. Though organized by the reign of images, life forces both compose and contest each iteration, each utterance.

22. Patricia Pisters, *The Neuro-Image: A Deleuzian Film-Philosophy of Digital Screen Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 298, addition mine.
23. Pisters, *The Neuro-Image*.
24. See Berardi, *After the Future*; and Mattero Pasquinelli, "Immaterial Civil War: Prototypes of Conflict with Cognitive Capitalism," in "Policies: A Critique of Creative Industries," European Institute for Progressive Cultural Politics, November 2006, accessed May 1, 2016, http://eipcp.net/policies/cci/pasquinelli/en.
25. Hito Steyerl, "The Poor Image," in *The Wretched of the Screen* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013). See also Jonathan Beller, "The Cinematic Program," *La Furia Umana 23 (*April 2015); no page. http://www.lafuriaumana.it/index.php/56-lfu-23/350-jonathan-beller-the-cinematic-program.
26. On the plus side, for example there is ASMR or autonomous sensory meridian response, known more colloquially, if I am not mistaken, as AIHO: Attention Induced Head Orgasm—something purportedly possible to achieve just by looking. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autonomous_sensory_meridian_response. Of course AIHO is not to be confused with IMHO, IMHO ("in my humble opinion") – particularly during texting.
27. "Camouflage from Face Detection," CV Dazzle, accessed May 1, 2016, http://cvdazzle.com.
28. For what promises to be a definitive text on these overlays see Benjamin Bratton, *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).
29. In the words of Lytro's Eric Cheng, "Light field is the holodeck"—you can capture all of the light that comes into the lens of the camera and thus, by choosing what to focus on, create the visual experience of being there. (Paul Miller, "Lytro's Eric Cheng on a Video Lytro: 'There's No Reason We Can't,'" January 11, 2012, accessed May 1, 2016, http://www.theverge.com/2012/1/11/2700845/lytros-eric-cheng-on-a-video-lytro-theres-no-reason-we-cant). For a technical account light fields see, Chia-Kai Liang, Yi-Chang Shih, and Homer H. Chen, "Light Field Analysis for Modeling Image Formation," *IEEE Transactions on Image Processing* 20, no. 2 (February 2011): 446-460. Also, see Note 30.
30. John Markoff, "At High Speed, on the Road to a Driverless Future," *New York Times*, May 27, 2013, accessed May 1, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/28/science/on-the-road-in-mobileyes-self-driving-car.html.
31. Taking issue with some of my examples for being "admittedly sexy but ultimately disappointing," Reader 1 of this essay for *Lateral* critically yet generously wrote,

> "Why not consider socio-computational practices that seek to do for our attention economy what striking and (more radically) seizing the means of production has done for "traditional" laborers? Here I'm thinking of the Wikipedia "Spanish Fork" labor strike, which effectively forced Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger away from their dream of a monetized, advertising-supported encyclopedia written by users to a non-profit version. In essence, the Spanish Wikipedians seized Wikipedian in the early 2000s, copying WP material to their own Enciclopedia Libre, forcing

> Wales to fire Sanger and abandon his Web 2.0 dreams of the exploitation of user labor. (This is not to say WP is perfect, by any means, but it is to say that here is a concrete instance of successful labor-centric resistance to the attention economy).
>
> "Or consider efforts to make alternative social media systems, such as the decentralized Twister (which is built on blockchain technologies, so it might align with the author's points about blockchains). Twister is the anti-Twitter: it is peer-to-peer; it cannot implement algorithms to shape our streams (and thus what we pay attention to); it is free software so it cannot be dominated by its creator, Brazilian software engineer Miguel Freitas; it cannot be seized by any state; it denies the logic on Internet advertising by not tracking users across the Internet, nor selling their attention to marketers; it has an internal economy based on computational mining that allows users the ability to send "promoted posts" but segregates those posts into a separate stream.
>
> "In both cases (Wikipedia Labor Strike, Twister) we have projects that aren't speculative, theoretical, or subtle. They are actually existing efforts to resist the dominant political economy of attention capitalism."

As I hope my long citation attests, I feel that these are noteworthy examples and I am pleased and indeed grateful to include them here. In response to the first draft of my essay, Reader 1 pointedly wrote, "I wonder why the old goal of seizing the means of (attention) production is off the table in favor of art projects and detouring through theory." However, I would submit and have tried to clarify that neither art, nor theory, nor anything else, including idle speculation can properly be thought to be in and of themselves detours in the M-M' circuit. These are all potentially pathways of valorization and can be transformed in multiple ways. Seizing the means of production certainly includes hardware (fixed capital), but also practices, ideas and, vexingly, one's own mind—in short, nearly all that goes under the sign of "culture." I sometimes refer to this cultivation of a reorganization of attention in relation to discursive acts as "the politics of the utterance." See my essay Jonathan Beller, "Wagers Within the Image: Rise of Visuality, Transformation of Labour, Aesthetics Regimes," *Culture Machine* 13 (2012): 22.

32. Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000); and Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).
33. Chun writes, "Media archeologist, Friedrich Kittler, taking this embedded and embedding logic to its limit, has infamously declared 'there is no software,' for everything, in the end reduces to voltage differences. More precisely he contends, 'there would be no software if computer systems were not surrounded… by an environment of everyday languages.'" Chun, *Programmed Visions*, 3, citing Friedrich Kittler, "There Is No Software," October 18, 1995, accessed May 1, 2016, http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=74. Chun says on page 2, "Based on metaphor, software has become a metaphor for the mind, for culture, for ideology, for biology and for the economy." She adds, "Computers, like other media, are metaphor machines: they both depend on and perpetuate metaphors. More remarkably though, they — through their status as "universal machines"— have become metaphors for metaphor itself." Chun, *Programmed Visions*, 55. Further breaking up the seemingly objective solidity of computation, Chun referred to the leakiness of computational machines in a talk entitled "To Be Determined" give at Pratt Institute on September 24, 2015.

34. Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography.*
35. Chun, *Programmed Visions.*
36. Stiegler, *For a New Critique of Political Economy.*
37. Tara McPherson, "U.S. Operating Systems at Mid-century: the Intertwining of Race and UNIX," in *Race After the Internet*, eds. Lisa Nakamura and Peter Chow-White (New York: Routledge, 2011), 21-37.
38. McPherson, "U.S. Operating Systems at Mid-century," 29.
39. "Shall we be forgiven for recalling that the father of information theory, Shannon, creator of a rigorous mathematical framework for evaluating the cost of a message, was an employee of the Bell Telephone Company? This does not of course alter the scientific value of his theorems, but suggests to us the need to limit its extrapolations (to the mechanical universe). It is not a matter of indifference that in France the administration of the *Télécoms* (D.G.T., C.N.E.T., etc.) should have been the principal source of financing and sponsorship of communication studies–conferences, seminars, chaired professorships, journals and other publications. That is not to diminish their merit, nor the intense interest they generate. But such is the hold means exert over ends, and machines over minds, that an unconscious 'halo effect' encourages us from those quarters to hallucinate the cultural history of human beings through the prism of the *Postes et Télécom*. A receiver, a wire, a signal. 'Hello, I hear you...OK, received your message, good-bye.' In more or less elaborate forms, this schema underlies '*the act of communication*,' a central unit of its reasoning." Regis Debray, *Media Manifestos: On the Technological Transmission of Cultural Forms*, trans. Eric Rauth (London: Verso, 1996), 42.
40. McPherson, "U.S. Operating Systems at Mid-century," 31.
41. Ibid., 35.
42. Max Kalehoff, "Rising value of Facebook Brand Fans Validates Social Marketing Investment," Syncapse Blog, April 17, 2013, accessed May 1, 2016, http://www.syncapse.com/rising-value-of-facebook-brand-fans-validates-social-marketing-investment/#.UXWI74KhDq7.
43. Michael D. Ryall, "The New Dynamics of Competition: An Emerging Science for Modeling Strategic Moves," *Harvard Business Review* 91, no. 6 (June, 2013): 80-87.
44. Julian Assange, "The Banality of 'Don't be Evil,'" *New York Times*, June 2, 2013, SR4.
45. Drawing on the attention theory of value, I published explicitly on the expropriation of screen labor by internet companies in 2001. See my essay, Jonathan Beller, "Third Cinema in a Global Frame: *Curacha*, Yahoo!, and *Manila by Night*," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 9, no. 2 (2001): 331-367.
46. With regard to state function, including warfare, extrajudicial rendition, and torture, Allen Feldman refers to "dismediation" and "apophatic blurring." See Feldman, *Archives of the Insensible.*
47. Note: I am grateful to Stephanie Boluk for bringing these renderings to my attention.
48. Neferti X. M. Tadiar, "Life-Times in Fate Playing," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111, no. 4 (Fall 2012): 783-802.
49. Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2006, 1986).

50. For an excellent analysis see, Max Haiven, *Cultures of Financialization: Fictitious Capital in Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

Bio



Jonathan Beller

Jonathan Beller is Professor of Humanities and Media Studies at Pratt Institute. Books and edited volumes include *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle*; *Acquiring Eyes: Philippine Visuality, Nationalist Struggle and the World-Media System*; and *Feminist Media Theory* (a special issue of *The Scholar and Feminist Online*). Among his current book projects are *The Programmable Image* and *The Message is Murder.* Beller has been a fellow at the Barnard Center for Research on Women and Gender, serves on the editorial collective of *Social Text*, and is the director of The Graduate Program in Media Studies at Pratt.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-40S3

Lateral
JOURNAL OF THE CULTURAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Ed Chamberlain, "Mixing and Mingling Queerly: The Activist Sociality of Mentoring in the Personal Narratives of Coloma and Lorde," *Lateral 5.1* (2016).

https://doi.org/10.25158/L5.1.5

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 5.1 (Spring 2016)

Mixing and Mingling Queerly: The Activist Sociality of Mentoring in the Personal Narratives of Coloma and Lorde

Ed Chamberlain

ABSTRACT Edward Chamberlain takes on the pressing need for mentorship for queer youth, in particular queer youth of color. Addressing a dearth in both studies on and commitment to the wellness and flourishing of queer youth of color in institutions of higher learning, Chamberlain turns to what is in some respects both a traditional and nontraditional archive of resources: personal narrative writing by queer people of color. Taking up both Audre Lorde's Zami: A New Spelling of My Name and Roland Sintos Coloma's "Fragmented Entries, Multiple Selves," Chamberlain argues that the structural hybridity of these narratives serves as a formal model for a queer mentoring methodology, and delves into the texts themselves for examples of how to mentor queer youth of color in and beyond the academy.

Introduction: Understanding the Challenges and Stories of Queer Youth of Color

In recent decades, numerous critics have suggested there is a pressing need to provide more mentoring to young people due to how many youth of various ancestries say they lack role models as well as encounter conflicts with family, peer groups, and institutions.[1] In particular, one of the youth populations that has vocalized a need for guidance and support are youth of color who self-identify themselves as bisexual, gay, lesbian, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ).[2] In a piecemeal manner, several American organizations and schools have attempted to address the concerns and questions that these young people face by trying to find mentors who can help these populations. However, there is still considerable resistance among community leaders and school administrators, who have rejected the attempts to publicly support the so-called non-traditional feelings, identities, and interests of such youth.[3] Some cynics may contend that a queer-positive approach to mentoring is incompatible with public-serving organizations and schools due to many communities' traditions, which generally militate against initiatives of social change. Conversely some educators now are expressing a greater interest in addressing these issues for the sake of creating a more inclusive and safe environs for students and staff. The debate over how to mentor and who should be involved in the mentoring process rages on; but there is ample evidence in diverse forms, such as personal narratives, that suggest there are multitudinous benefits to making mentorship more *queerly* inclusive, especially for vulnerable populations.

Although this modality of mentoring queer youth has received more attention in the past decade, the experience of mentoring sexual minorities is discernible in the autobiographies and personal narratives from decades earlier—a time period in which queer activists and other civil rights groups assembled coalitions to advance their socio-political aims as well as safeguarding the well-being of at-risk groups. Cultural researchers have shown that activists pursued this coalitional approach as they realized the lives of

queer people were being undercut by systemic forms of bias, inequality, privilege, and rigid binarisms that are perpetuated by the ingrained laws, policies, and standards of US institutions and other powerful groups.[4] By studying the cultural products of the mid- to late twentieth century, such as the personal narratives of queer activists of color, we stand to gain a more nuanced social cognizance about the ways that cultural workers devised commentaries about, and strategies for dealing with the systemic structures that threatened the futures of queer youth.

The feminist writer Audre Lorde and the activist researcher Roland Sintos Coloma both reflect on this set of challenges in the prior decades as well as speak to the ways that queer forms of mentorship enabled them to survive and thrive. These two authors provide compelling evidence that queer mentoring can be a remarkable ameliorative phenomenon that manifests in a wide array of interactions. A range of mentoring experiences enabled Coloma and Lorde to navigate through the social morass that threatened their rise to greater heights. Both authors notably foster deeper thinking about mentoring as well as tell their story in an imaginative and sophisticated way. While we may relish the attractive aesthetic elements of these authors' narratives, there are also several gains that come with contextualizing and historicizing these texts, comparing them and linking them to the real struggles that persist in our present day.

Studying the narratives of Coloma and Lorde and their portrayals of struggle can help critics and readers to cultivate further understanding of social vulnerabilities and how these dynamics relate to powerful systems that Coloma and Lorde comment on (such as education, industry, religion, and government, among others). This knowledge will prove generative and useful for educators, parents, and other constituencies who are working in diverse positions beyond the boundaries of the ivory tower, classroom, or conventional campus. Educators, practitioners, and other professionals who work in service positions and the fields of education can deepen their knowledge and refine their critical lenses through recognizing the connections between the intellectual work of Coloma and Lorde and the social problems in the material world. Moreover, by poring over these personal narratives, we deepen our knowledge about how queer forms of mentoring can engender a means to short-circuit the bullying and other forms of social oppression that queer youth of color routinely encounter within a broad range of private and public locales. Looking to the stories of Coloma and Lorde—people who found eventually some success after much personal strife—also enables us to open up the discussion of queer mentoring to more audiences who already take delight in creative and intellectual work of figures like Roland Sintos Coloma and Audre Lorde. While Lorde certainly will have a larger following due to her pioneering efforts in poetry and public activism, Coloma provides an equally significant commentary that confirms the urgency of the issues shown in these texts. Therefore by *coming out* about their queer mentoring experiences, these authors speak to the positive forms of intellectual growth that can (and do) occur in the everyday spaces of queer social spheres.

The Contexts of Queer Mentoring: Situating Social Practices in Discourse and Text

The scholars Margo V. Perkins and Martha M. Watson proffer perspectives on the ways that writing about the personal and the political have far-reaching implications that extend into the larger culture and socio-political realm.[5] Perkins and Watson show that while marginalized populations, such as women of color, historically have been denied opportunities to speak in the public sphere, these groups have managed to intervene in hegemonic discourse by sharing personal stories that contest systems of power and privilege. Queer populations, such as lesbians, have built their activisms on the aforesaid

approaches by similarly utilizing stories of personal struggle and triumph to contest actions that directly and indirectly work against queers of color. This is not to say the struggles of these populations are equivalent, but rather this framework serves as a means of theorizing the historic and varied ways in which people are supporting queer youth of color as well as encouraging youth in a range of artistic and critical contexts. Making sense of these multifaceted developments requires a syncretic approach that builds on viewpoints from several fields of thought, yet due to certain constraints this article mainly will focus on the American contexts that are articulated by Coloma and Lorde. Both of these authors illustrate the social complexities of self-development and what it means to be a queer person of color in the mid- and latter-half of the twentieth century—a time period when the social scourges of homophobia, racism, and sexism colluded against queer youth of color. As Lorde blends her "dreams/myths/histories" and Coloma draws together several fragments of personal writing, these authors create narratives that connote the idea that today's approaches to mentoring young people should be more diversified, integrative, and queerly inclusive.[6]

To begin their stories of personal development, Coloma and Lorde both explain how their parents migrated to the US near the middle of the twentieth century: Lorde is the daughter of Grenadian parents, while Coloma's family is Filipino in ancestry. These origins play substantive roles in shaping the development of youth who are depicted in Lorde's biomythography *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* and Coloma's narrative "Fragmented Entries, Multiple Selves: A Search for A Place to Call Home."[7] Through their texts' titles, both Coloma and Lorde articulate how they understand themselves as inhabiting multiple identity categories, and in the process they call attention to the problematics of normative processes of categorization. These authors' titles set the stage for their reflections on how their lives have been constituted by more than one cultural origin, as well as by experiences such as class, race, and sexuality. In addition to showing their multiple origins and their titles, Lorde and Coloma further emphasize this underlying idea of mixing by blending various textual forms, thus fostering resistance to the idea that people must conform to limiting categories that constrain and demoralize vulnerable groups like queer youth of color. As Lorde and Coloma utilize these approaches, they reveal the ways that queer youth of color are forced to reckon with technologies of otherness that Western societies have perpetuated through binaristic and rigid systems of gender, heteronormative familialism, and white privilege.[8] To theorize how these authors resist and respond to such issues, we must bring the issue of youth development to the center of the dialogue. By doing so, we will think further about how the texts show a lack of mentorship for youth *and* how this lacuna speaks to the need to build up a queer epistemological practice that empowers queer youth of color.

In tracing the origins of this mentoring lacuna, we must recognize the ways in which many queer people have been identified as a *threat* to youth as well as how this calumny has inhibited the mentoring that could have benefited Coloma and Lorde. Unquestionably, the phenomenon of disconnecting queer people from young Americans has a long history to it, and when we read the writing of Coloma and Lorde, we observe that queer mentoring is by no means a twenty-first century phenomenon, nor is queer mentoring an untested approach.[9] This form of mentoring also does more than simply teach or pass along knowledge. By showing how they connect with mentors, who might address the *queer questions* of youth, I contend Coloma and Lorde enact a form of social activism in an effort to both help themselves as well as inform readers about the ways that queer youth of color can respond to the pressures exerted upon them by the social forces of white heteropatriarchy and class-based oppression. In these authors' cases, the queer questions might be paraphrased as—How do I understand my place in romantic and sexual relationships that are ostensibly distinct from those I see all around me? How do I live

honestly when my parents reject my way of looking at the world and relationships I desire? What do I need to know in order to confront and survive the challenges of homophobic violence? How do I deal with the intersections of homophobia, classism, and racism in my communities?

As Coloma and Lorde ponder such questions, they articulate how they mitigated their suffering by practicing what critics have called the broadening of "the family center."[10] This move entails the inclusion of figures and groups from outside of the biological family to foster the development of youth in the precarious time of adolescent life. This heuristic of *broadening the center* enables integration of resources for youth, as well as provides a means for researchers to theorize how queer youth of color benefit from finding supportive interlocutors who advise, assist, and listen. This notion of *familial broadening* also allows for a rethinking of ingrained kinship relations as well as fostering forms of critical consciousness that are more attuned to the severe challenges that queer youth of color face.[11] Much as activists do, these writers integrated unrelated people into their social sphere, and in so doing, they reveal that having mentors outside the family proves useful because coming out as LGBTQ in the homes of heterosexual parents was especially perilous during the period when Coloma and Lorde grew up—the mid to late twentieth century. As many critics and queer people will attest, revealing one's sexual orientation to a patriarchal family unit holds the potential to jeopardize the youth's familial relationships and safety.[12] According to these writers' narratives and the research of many social scientists, finding supportive mentors and an empathetic social sphere is indispensable in achieving a modicum of happiness, wellness, and a healthy outlook on one's life experience. As Coloma and Lorde make known, some of their better mentoring relations were established with LGBTQ people who were met in social circles outside of their own families such as in schools or radically different communities. Rather than maintaining the ingrained status quo that delineates heterosexual parents or leaders as being the ideal, Coloma and Lorde offer *Other* kinds of mentoring, which allow youth to create a broader set of social possibilities and a hospitable set of outcomes.

Broadening prior concepts of mentoring is imperative insofar as queer youth of color seldom see themselves represented in the conventional modes of learning, such as family rituals, school lessons, extracurricular activities, and church-related functions. In the same way, queer youth of color have reported that the people they envision as being role models, such as actors, celebrities, or public figures, are largely distant and inaccessible in daily life.[13] Similarly in the larger landscape of organizations that provide mentoring to youth outside of the homespace, very few show a deliberate effort to address the questions that queer youth of color are facing. Due to these obstacles, queer youth of color and their supporters are innovating to head off anti-gay and racist threats, producing queer acts of mentoring in a variety of cultural and social forms. Such forms of mentoring range from actions that are carried out by people who resist heteronormative identifiers, to acts of supporting youth who self-identify in queer ways as well as educating readers through queer storylines. Hence to mitigate this deplorable lacuna of mentoring, we must attempt to *queer* (and reimagine) the praxis of mentoring and embrace a more inclusive notion of mentoring for the sake of enabling new futures and explaining the motley ways in which queer youth of color learn about whom they can become.[14] This approach is taken here as queer youth of color draw upon many *informal* kinds of inspiration, learning, and support that come from people who might not exactly fit in the dominant culture's definitions of "mentor." By thinking through these lenses, we can instantiate a more mindful suite of approaches that will assist disadvantaged youth today and tomorrow. To develop such beneficial approaches further, we must consider how critics have contemplated these matters within prior cases and contexts.

Critical Approaches: Linking Dialogues about Mentoring Queer Youth of Color

New and insightful theorizations of mentoring have been developed by scholars, such as Bernadette Marie Calafell, Krishna Pattisapu, and Kathleen F. McConnell, who have shown that professional relations in the field of education can generate a form of mentoring that resembles kinship, suggesting the social spheres of family and education can overlap at times.[15] As these researchers show us, those spheres often are entrenched in heteronormative processes that attempt to police younger generations and maintain hegemonic notions of morality, purity, and respectability. Despite the transitions and efforts being made by many institutions currently, change continues to feel *slow*, which is driving current efforts to create safer spaces for younger generations such as queer youth of color. In these cases, the discourse and phenomena of queer mentoring offer critics a kind of *third space* (other than those of familial or institutional spaces) insofar as it exhibits the potentiality to foster a more fluid, inventive, and hybrid form of experiential growth. As the texts of Coloma and Lorde show queer mentoring to be a mix of approaches, the narratives reinforce this perspective by weaving together a mix of aesthetic and creative choices, which amplify and reify the texts' underlying ideas of mentoring. Notably, both Coloma and Lorde utilize codeswitching, non-normative writing techniques, and paratextual framing in their narratives, which create an unconventional narrative flow that causes readers to reflect on how the texts' elements relate and function as a whole. As Coloma and Lorde expose the problems of learning in formal locations of learning, such as schools, and more hospitable kinds of mentoring that happen outside of the home, they *mentor readers* to think analytically about how inculcated structures shape our opportunities in daily life as well as representations of that life. And as they embrace the non-normative structures of learning within mentoring, they also embrace other non-normative structures in writing that create a mirror effect where the social experience parallels the textual experience significantly. In both their social and textual contexts, elements are mixed and brought into dialogue with one another, thereby creating a richer and multifaceted tapestry of developmental experiences for readers to contemplate.

Through this parallel, Coloma and Lorde create what scholars identify as *hybrid narratives*, which both mix writing formats and make bridges betwixt ostensibly disconnected cultures.[16] Moreover these texts instruct us that—by celebrating and mentoring forms of hybrid selfhood in hybrid narratives—we can convey a more compelling statement about the need to resist processes like daily activities that maintain flawed myths about racial and sexual purity that generate caustic forms of social conformism. In other words, these texts' hybrid forms and lives foster an aesthetic of hybrid resistance that leads readers to move beyond conformist and exclusionary phenomena, including segregation and white supremacy that imperil youth. Previously, scholars Jean Fernandez, Holly E. Martin, and Vivian M. May have theorized hybrid narratives as articulating personal experiences that consist of more than one cultural origin, as well as demonstrate a mixture of writing techniques such as critique, fiction, and poetry.[17]

This embrace of, and proclivity for hybridity is evident from the start of Audre Lorde's narrative *Zami,* where she explains her desire for mixing: "I have always wanted to be both man and woman, to incorporate the strongest and richest parts of my mother and father within/into me […] My body, a living representation of other life older longer wiser."[18] Similarly in Coloma's narrative "Fragmented Entries, Multiple Selves," he explains how he perceives his identity in hybrid terms by positing: "I knew that my father had Spanish blood in him, especially since my grandfather looked mestizo. My grandmother from my

mother's side claimed Chinese ancestry."[19] Through these statements, Coloma and Lorde underscore how they celebrate and envision their lives through a discourse of synthesis, and accordingly, they represent this syncretic process through both the text's construction as well as through their learning with a diverse cadre of queer mentors. While a small group of scholars such as Monica B. Pearl have astutely identified some of these phenomena in Lorde's narrative before, the aforesaid links of genre, mentoring, race, and sexuality are less theorized.[20] For example, while scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins and José Esteban Muñoz have theorized the sociopolitical experiences of intersectionality, some questions remain about how the intersections of race and sexuality relate to the mentoring when it arises in the romantic intimacies between younger and older women (like those we observe within Lorde's text *Zami*).[21] As Coloma and Lorde show us in their tales, queer youth of color face more challenges than their white counterparts because they routinely experience marginalization in two major ways (due to racism and homophobia); this problem is by no means new and while some social change has improved living conditions for queer youth of color, there is still great need for mentoring that is more integrative and open-minded.

As Coloma and Lorde challenge earlier and contemporary ideas about mentoring and queer life through their hybrid textualities and socializing, their work conveys a set of relations that I call *the aesthetic of activist sociality*—a concept similar to the scholarly heuristic of "queer sociality," which often is used to theorize today's sexual cultures.[22] This idea of activist sociality is a means of naming the ephemeral interactions, feelings, and thought that people enact when they mentor queer youth of color. These dynamics come into play through hybrid processes, such as acts where people work together to help youth, who face problematically essentialist ideas like the notion that heterosexuality is inherent in youth. To develop this concept further, we can consider how this activism can take on an aesthetic form in writing and how this activist sociality may be capable of fostering beneficial outcomes such as inspiring people to take action, raising awareness about the impact of systemic inequalities, as well as revealing the social struggles unique to the intersectionalities of class, race, and sexuality.

These activist aesthetics of Coloma and Lorde enable youth to contemplate alternative ways of living, hence empowering youth to choose their own mentors in much the same way that queers often *choose* their own forms of family.[23] To be more precise, the writing of Coloma and Lorde can be read as activist interventions because their content and mode of storytelling resemble what many activists call "zaps" or "direct-actions." In the activism of the 1980s and 1990s, the terms "zap" or "direct-action" were used to name actions that interrupt normative processes that bear down on us. The writings of Coloma and Lorde constitute what I call a *textual zap* because these unusual writings discard the human role of being a passive, reverent citizen, and they actively critique the heteronormative principles that contribute to the marginalization of queer people. These authors' life writings act as zappy interventions because much like queer activist groups, such as the prominent AIDS activist group ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), they seek to trouble the status quo of heterosexual white supremacy that has attempted to keep down queers of color or prey upon their communities. While some critics may question the effect that writing has on the larger world—where not everyone always reads—there remains an activist adage that suggests every contribution is a worthwhile one. As Muñoz has shown, seemingly small actions, such as the narration of personal experience, relationships, or other work, can make more long-term ripples in our broader social world, thus eventually creating a profound impact.[24]

In his short autobiographical narrative, Coloma explains how several mentors enabled Coloma to work through these tensions, empowering him to become a contributing

member of his surrounding queer communities as well as make progress in his education. Coloma explains how his activist friends acted like educators for him, saying: "I learned indispensable lessons from and developed meaningful relationships with older student activists […] these mentors and comrades were a source of encouragement and confidence as I ventured into the more visible positions of coordinating a statewide student network."[25] In these words, Coloma reveals how he both held certain privileges in having educational opportunities even as he felt compelled to find mentors, who gave him the strength to excel, confront prejudice, educate, and lead others. As his narrative attests, these mentors enabled Coloma to find purpose and institute an activist sociality through his actions and thought. Today Coloma works in an academic position, specializing in the research of education and Filipino and Asian diasporic experiences. Yet this is not to say that all youth must recognize the paths of Coloma and Lorde as being a so-called queer ideal. Rather, these writers signal to us that helping a youth to resist and survive the fiery strife of homophobia, racism, and other depredation is a necessary activist project that enables queers of color to devise productive future pathways as well as find a means to cope with traumas.[26]

To understand the activist projects of Coloma and Lorde, we can turn to fields of cultural and performance studies, which provide illuminating frameworks for understanding how activist narratives can be used (and understood) as providing a sense of direction for the future. The work of the scholar Margo V. Perkins again offers context concerning the ways in which activists have deployed nonfiction narratives to achieve political goals as well as to create a hospitable future.[27] As Perkins shows, black activist women writers from the 1960s generated social awareness and inspired audiences through narrating their struggles within a world that continually privileges whiteness and heterosexual male figures above everyone else. This research reveals how some activists gain an influential position and leave a profound impact on readers that can have long-lasting and life-changing results. In her study of these activists' writings, Perkins explains:

> Activists use life writing to create themselves as well as the era they recount. Many things are at stake for them in this process. These things include control of the historical record, control over their own public images, and control over how the resistance movement in which they are involved is defined and portrayed.[28]

Much as Perkins suggests, Coloma and Lorde illustrate their strong positionality as experts and participants in the social issues through their narration of both daily activities and their long-term involvement in social justice movements. Through such writing, the activist becomes an agent of change who holds the power to transform socio-political realities for the betterment of humanity. Notably in the beginning of Lorde's narrative, she speaks of compatriots who lent their "power" to her, showing her gratitude to those who enabled her to gain a form of agency and place in the civic dialogue.[29] This same idea comes through in Coloma's narrative as well as his personal website, whereby he points to how he has been "committed to the principles and practices of education for diversity and social justice."[30] In his words, Coloma demonstrates how educators, students, and writers can exhibit leadership in the face of seemingly insurmountable issues, such as college campus policy, for the sake of advancing positive forms of transformation.

In the the early twenty-first century, the scholarship of Krishna Pattisapu and Bernadette Marie Calafell vocalizes an analytical and reflective perspective on the robust potentials of relational experiences between academics involved in mentoring activities, demonstrating how collaborations, conversations, and relationships can enable youth to have an efflorescence of self-development and social advancement. As in the

aforementioned research above, Pattisapu and Calafell call attention to how pursuing informative advisers can lead to positive results such as extending one's collegial network, which can strengthen personal resolve and lead to the creation of new opportunities that were once ostensibly unavailable or impossible. In their study of academic environs and how they relate to queer experiences, Pattisapu and Calafell explain:

> We argue through dialogue we establish powerful coalitions with families of choice whom help us to queerly navigate pedagogical contexts that attempt to silence and erase us. We believe that the likelihood that queer people and people of color will achieve academic success relies significantly on the establishment of relationships with strong mentors within and across identity lines.[31]

Pattisapu and Calafell illustrate that by concatenating experienced professionals with the next generation, we develop new pathways and find strengths that are needed to make progress. This is not to say that mentoring will solve all social ills or ameliorate deeply entrenched ways of thinking that privilege certain social formations—such as heteronormative familial dynamics—but these mentoring dialogues are a means to jumpstart alternative social realities and mutually agreeable collaborations. To consider these endeavors in another way, we can theorize that this collaborative project is actually a kind of hybrid endeavor that brings Coloma and Lorde into greater dialogue with one another. Through this comparative project, we discern the authors' work as offering a productive example of the ways we can collaborate innovatively, and in the process, they bespeak several helpful ways of thinking about personal growth in quotidian environments that are often inhospitable to marginalized groups like queer youth of color.

Audre Lorde Speaks *Out*: Finding Queer Mentors in Unexpected Places

Of the two writers considered here, the one who has challenged sexual and textual conventions most famously is the late American poet Audre Lorde, who also has worked as a stalwart activist, instructor, and librarian. Lorde unflinchingly offered critiques of the US status quo in her artistic expressions and essays—much of which has similarities with protest art. Her zappy and integrative pieces lead us to consider the implications of the societal structures which maintain standards that shore up the privilege of the upper-class and light-skinned populations. Her work also offers readers an eye-opening and sobering perspective on the potentialities of art. This becomes clearer in an interview that Lorde participated in during the 1980s where she spoke about the intentional relationship between her artistry and activism in an interview. She explains:

> So the question of social protest and art is inseparable for me. I can't say it is an either-or proposition. Art for art's sake doesn't really exist for me. […] what was beautiful had to serve the purpose of changing my life, or I would have died. If I cannot air this pain and alter it, I will surely die of it. That's the beginning of social protest.[32]

Art and protest are shown to be unified and hybrid within these words in much the same way as Lorde experiences a personal form of cultural hybridity in her ancestry. Moreover this linkage of art and protest is a means to "air this pain," which holds the potential to "alter" the struggle of her own life. While Lorde has highlighted the importance of bringing social change to the public sphere, I contend that her stories about her home and private relations are equally important because they show how the early and intimate dimensions of her life drove her to wish for a kind of belonging and connectivity in places outside of the domestic sphere.[33] This wish becomes particularly visible as Lorde departs from her

familial home at the age of seventeen when she realizes her desire for freedom from the constraints of her strait-laced, religious mother.[34]

While Audre also shares positive memories of her mother, including how her mother's Grenadian traditions shaped her, readers ultimately perceive the mother's social conservatism as it conflicts with Audre's personal politics. She explains her mother's disdain for unconventionality by saying: "No deviation was allowed from her [mother's] interpretations of correct."[35] Her sharp term "deviation" speaks to the tension that reached a fever pitch during her sophomore year, and regarding this moment Audre says, "I often felt that I had died and wakened up in a hell called home [...] My mother responded to these changes in me as if I were a foreign hostile."[36] In this instance, Audre breaks from the notion that the home space is a place of happiness, safety, and well-being. While zapping readers to think about what it means to be persona non grata, Audre tells how she turns to her friends "the Branded," who are also ostracized. She describes them:

> We were the Branded, the Lunatic Fringe, proud of our outrageousness and our madness, our bizarre-colored inks and quill pens. We learned how to mock the straight set, and how to cultivate our group paranoia into instinct for self-protection [...] *How meager the sustenance was I gained from the four years I spent in high school; yet, how important that sustenance was to my survival.*[37]

Audre's sustenance was her network of friends that enabled her to endure and overcome the daily "pain and rejection" that accompanied her high school life as an "outsider."[38] At this early point in Audre's life, she had yet to self-identify as lesbian outwardly, yet she encodes herself here as countercultural, or queerly in contrast to the heterosexual "squares."[39] The Branded can be read as an instance of activist sociality because for Audre, these friends intervene in the pain of her loneliness, delivering a caring and loving form of peer-mentoring.[40] Like many mentors, these friends bolster Audre but they neither talk down to her, nor vitiate her. Their relations more so resemble a bricolage of caring acts and thought. Indeed, the scholars Bernadette Marie Calafell and Kate Willink have theorized that at times mentoring relies on the affect of care and love, demonstrating that such acts have cerebral and emotional depths that merit consideration.[41] These writers' texts encapsulate the emotional support that is needed to survive the innumerable challenges of everyday stresses. In this same vein, the acts of the Branded in Lorde's story can be read as creating a significant affective apparatus because they build their sociality on a kind of love that enables them to contest some of the inequalities and marginalization that comes about in the often troubled social relations of many school systems.[42] Later when she moves out of her home, Lorde begins to share a living space with her Branded friends, and by living with these supporters, she lives in a more socially healthy and collaborative way.

Lorde's personal writing corroborates the research that suggests social networks and mentoring can empower and guard the futures of young people. Let us consider how the critic Jean E. Rhodes explains that: "mentoring and other youth programs can protect them [youth] against negative choices and support their healthy development."[43] Rhodes's words ring true in the context of Lorde's writing because, as we see in her work, a mentor helps Lorde to explore her queerness in the Mexican city of Cuernavaca. While she travels to Mexico, Lorde meets a group of lesbian women who offer much-needed camaraderie and encouragement. In particular, she meets an older white American lesbian by the name of Eudora, who helps Lorde to learn about both the local area and what it means to be lesbian. Eudora's role is that of a mentor, and despite the generational difference, Eudora engages Lorde in conversation, thus coming to occupy a special place in Lorde's heart. In the text, Lorde explains this friendship and hopes:

> I planned to leave when school was over, and secretly, more and more, hoped she [Eudora] could come with me. Despite all the sightseeing I had done, and all the museums and ruins I had visited, and the books I had read, it was Eudora who opened those doors for me leading to the heart of this country and its people. It was Eudora who showed me the way to the Mexico I had come looking for, that nourishing land of light and color where I was somehow at home.[44]

Though Audre had come to Mexico to explore and learn the Spanish language at a school, we see that she develops herself through her friendship with Eudora. That is to say, as Eudora and Audre become more familiar, Audre expands her horizons, even though Eudora creates certain tensions due to her excessive consumption of alcohol. Nevertheless, Lorde wishes for Eudora to travel with her, and this shows that the two women developed a powerful social bond, which evinces the intimacy of family or a partnership. Lorde reiterates this idea later in the text, when she explains, "I had learned from Eudora how to take care of business, be dyke-proud, how to love and live to tell the story, and with flair."[45] In her words, we see Eudora was not only a source of support for Lorde, but also an educator with regard to what it means to be able to stand on one's own.

This conflation of lover and mentor reinforces the critical perspectives of researchers, such as Thomas Simmons and Margaret Wooster Freeman, who demonstrate the ways that desire and learning are imbricated in diverse cultural contexts.[46] In the matters of desire and learning, impulses of curiosity and hope for completion can often draw the mentee closer to the mentor, creating an intimacy that constitutes the self in hybrid ways. Yet when Lorde's relationship with Eudora breaks apart—due to Eudora's excessive drinking (and she desires to finish her college education)—Lorde ultimately returns to New York. At that moment, the US Supreme Court had decided against racial segregation, and the fear-mongering machine of Joseph McCarthy was censured officially by the US Senate.[47] In this transformational moment, Lorde herself shows how she experiences several forms of self-development, including new social and romantic relations with women that stimulate personal and social growth. She explains, "Every woman I have ever loved has left her print upon me."[48] In a rather physical way, her statement indicates her identity is an amalgam (or hybrid formation) of both herself and these women who "feed me like corn before labor."[49] This nurturing form of sociality sustains Lorde, and by sharing this feeling, she uncovers a path that invites other young queers of color to chart their own ways.

Coloma's Mix of Fragments and Friends: Networking *Out* of the Home

In recent research about the lives of queer people of color, scholars have demonstrated there are benefits to crafting projects that link the genres of critical perspectives and personal narratives. The scholarship of Bernadette Marie Calafell again provides helpful context for thinking about the ways in which the hybrid narratives of Coloma and Lorde offer us critical perspectives in both artistic and personal ways.[50] Historically, much academic publishing has aimed to remove the "I" from critical perspectives, however as Calafell elucidates, personal stories can provide compelling evidence for addressing both quotidian issues as well as larger institutional and theoretical problems. In a very similar way, Coloma's own personal narrative integrates the personal and the analytical by narrativizing the ways that several friends advised, tutored, and invited him to join their groups, which had numerous social benefits for him.[51] This support was necessary while Coloma and his family were coming to terms with one another's dissimilar feelings on matters of Coloma's sexual orientation. Coloma's essay bears a striking resemblance to

Lorde's own work insofar as Coloma sutures together several parts of his life through writing three well-developed "fragments," which speak to his experiences of personal struggle with overcoming family strife and searching for "a place to call home."[52] This desire for a "home" calls attention to the feeling of homelessness that many queers of color experience due to the exclusions they face in both the queer and white cultural contexts that they inhabit. By articulating these fraught circumstances, Coloma mentors his readers about the need to deal with these familial and social dynamics in a way that will create options for queer youth of color.

Coloma's three fragments also reflect three moments of Coloma's life, yet they add up to a larger social trajectory in which Coloma discusses how he came see himself as an activist and how he gained a "critical consciousness" from several queer Filipino men as well as others who "represented a strong political voice."[53] In this manner, his queer support system provided support that helped him grow personally, as well as enabled him to help his surrounding Asian American and Pacific American communities to grow. Hence while some critics might assume that his mix of textual fragments and "multiple selves" might imply a troubling disunity, perspicacious readers will observe a larger story arc in which Coloma's mingling with various groups ultimately grants him a critical and hybrid perspective on what must be done to empower queer students of color.[54] Like the mixing of critique, poetry, and narrative in Lorde's hybrid biomythography, Coloma imbricates social critique with a story of domestic realism, creating a textual zap that interrupts the notion that a son should always follow in his father's footsteps and continue the family's legacy. Coloma's zap urges us to consider the benefits of accepting social change and cultural diversity, including that of diverse sexual cultures in the familial sphere.

Like Audre Lorde and many queer people, Coloma is hesitant to tell his family about his bisexual sense of self because he worries that his utterance of bisexuality could lead to a snap-judgment or something worse. Yet despite Coloma's concerns, his biological family actually demonstrates social support for him after he has revealed his secret, even though his family is still unprepared for how this interior sense of self might shape his future. Instead of accepting his family's lack of knowledge as being an impassable challenge, Coloma forges a new path and uses this moment as a chance to mentor his uninformed intimates about his reality. He explains:

> Surprisingly, my family was supportive, although my parents were concerned about my health status and partner choice as well as the negative social and professional consequences. Initially, they hypothesized that my conscious departure from Catholicism, my infrequent church attendance, and the geographical distance between me and my family contributed to my 'confusion.' They thought I went astray because the [...] family no longer guided me.[55]

Coloma's wording of "confusion," which is highlighted through his use of quotation marks, is a technique that both connotes his parents' conventional viewpoint, as well as reveals Coloma's own approach to his parents. Instead of lambasting his parents for framing his sense of self as *confused*, he is considerate of the learning curve that comes with the realities of *mentoring* an older, more traditional generation about the complexities of sexual identity. To a similar extent, it is notable that Coloma's parents perceive his absence as being the cause of his "confusion," thus calling attention to the myth that the bonds created in the domestic sphere have a role in (re)producing heterosexuality. However, he explains to us that after having "sat down with them," they arrive at a mutual understanding that is "supportive of my choices, relationships and happiness."[56] What these scenes reveal is the ameliorative potential of intervening in familial tensions and disrupting what scholars have called the "heteronarrative" of modern writing.[57] Instead of

maintaining a wall of silence, which activists have shown to be lethal, the family members create a bridge and hybrid understanding between their differing views.

Unlike Lorde's relationship with her mother, Coloma mostly reconciles with his parents, and in so doing, he educates readers that queers are never a threat to the familial sphere. Indeed, Coloma's textual propensity towards education is representative of the way that many queer stories operate as a kind of infotainment, educating the public about queer matters that must be heard—especially if any form of social progress is to be made. Equally, the scholarship of José Esteban Muñoz, has shown how queer stories, such as that of Pedro Zamora, has functioned as a form of public pedagogy.[58] The need for such public pedagogy is especially pressing because, as Coloma suggests, not everyone will have parents that accept them as his do. Coloma says, "I knew I was one of the few fortunate ones. Some of my bisexual, transgender, lesbian, and gay friends had related disastrous coming-out stories to me. A few chose not to reveal their sexual and gender orientations to their family, fearing negative consequences."[59] Coloma's language here shows the dismal possibilities that some queers face in their moments of coming-out. This potentiality is also what motivates Coloma to find queer sociality: "I knew I would have the support of my 'family' of friends in southern California."[60] Although Coloma places the word in quotation marks to highlight his innovative usage of the term, he nonetheless shows how his gay-friendly allies helped when he was unable to be upfront about his sexuality. In this instance, I interpret Coloma's quotation marks not as a means of diminishing his queer-supportive network, but rather to highlight the improvised sociality of these relations. These quotation marks also point to the absence of queer-specific terminology for the activist sociality that he creates with his friends. Unsurprisingly, this same absence has led to the innovative creation of other terms for queer mentors, including that of "drag mother" and "leather daddy," among others.

As queer cultural critics, such as Tom Donaghy and Shilpa Mehta have noted, queers have struggled without mentors (and without a coherent lexicon) because of the weighty silence imposed on them by their cultures' heterosexual patriarchal order.[61] For example, Donaghy insists, "gays rarely find mentors in their families. Even if we grew up with our fathers, those fathers generally weren't gay, removing a fundamental level of connection."[62] As Donaghy's words imply, the dynamic at work in Coloma's text is created by a pressing need to find support systems, such as role models, who could help queer youth to find positive paths towards self-determination. Notably, Coloma explains that his life as an activist proved pivotal in shaping his path in life:

> "I learned indispensible lessons from and developed meaningful friendships with older activists, a few of whom were Asian American and Pacific Islander queer men and queer-positive women. These Asian American and Pacific Islander queer and queer-positive radicals raised my critical consciousness."[63]

In Coloma's case, his friends enable him to scrutinize his circumstances and his relations to the world around him. Coloma's enclave of queer activists provides him with a mentoring sphere that empowers him to critique other forms of social oppression around him such as "institutionalized racism."[64] His queer mentoring group allows for the creation of multiple activisms, and in this way, Coloma shows that colleagues and friends are by no means inferior or less influential than biological kin. As such, he endorses a much less traditional model of affective and social support, implying that queer-friendly youth groups and queer-friendly role models are needed for the purpose of fostering younger generations.

Crafting social groups that can mentor and support queer youth of color like Coloma must be a high priority for this century's activists, educators, families, leaders, and others. To

understand such mentoring groups, we can turn to the work of scholars like Karma R. Chávez who has observed that social justice groups, such as Coloma's band of supportive mentors, can benefit from the kind of coalition-building that reaches out to multiple parties.[65] In other words, Chávez tells that successful coalitions are made by drawing together people of multiple talents, making what might be called a hybrid coalition. This same coalitional idea is addressed near the end of Coloma's narrative, where he explains his efforts to unite people across the spectrum:

> My bold attempts to raise topics of sexuality among people of color or issues of racism in queer groups have been met with quizzical looks, blatant denial, or patronizing dismissal [...] I do not prioritize my identities or claim to speak for the communities I belong to. I am limited in my own experiences, readings and interactions with others. Yet I search continuously for better understanding, linkage, cooperation, and harmony.[66]

Although his narrative is now over ten years old, his coming-of-age story nevertheless speaks to the contemporary challenges that many activists still encounter today, where some groups have yet to work collectively to address systemic problems that transcend identity categories. Such coalition-building has potential to foster more effective and varied means of mentoring queer youth of color, yet of course much more work remains to be done within (and across) the many tiers of social organizing, civic action, and educational reform. What appears pivotal is—activists and writers must persist and hold themselves to fostering a sense of queer futurity, which can provide some hope for the future. As Muñoz suggests, such a belief in this future is needed due to the fact that he and myriad critics continue to perceive our present culture and politics to be socially "poisonous" for many queer cultures within the US and beyond.[67]

Conclusion: Imagining and Safeguarding *Other* Paths through Mentoring

In theorizing the provocative narratives of Coloma and Lorde, certain conceptual relationships between hybridity and other tropes reveal the sophisticated craftsmanship that intermingles with two coming of age stories. This sophisticated hybrid experience is created by bringing together a diverse cadre of mentors for the sake of finding a support system for addressing the deplorable social effects caused by homophobia, racism, and sexism. Likewise, we can surmise that this hybridity in the authors' textual constructions has a similar intent—to address social problems in creative ways that spur new modes of thinking and generate new ideas instead of mandating particularities. At the same time, it must be noted that these authors' hybrid narratives never create (nor intend) a sense of wholeness or completion that resembles a cure-all to these life writers' problems. Rather, these pieces show there is a partial quality to these stories (i.e. we only hear small segments of certain life moments), and the implication is that unity and wholeness may be unnecessary in activist projects of mentoring.[68] Thus rather than maintaining the ingrained biopolitics of family and other social modalities, such as heterosexual reproduction, these narratives create a novel synthesis that raises up the social intimacies and passing of knowledge between people, who are not related to one another by blood. In doing so, these authors' efforts enable us to think beyond the cruel and ingrained beliefs that queer people are stunted or hopeless deviants who have no (reproductive) future. Quite to the contrary, these writers state and suggest that queers of color have futurity, and these queer people indeed deserve to have access to the resources and support that would allow people to flourish.

To mitigate the caustic conditions that queer youth face, we should take stock of the lessons shared through the narratives of Roland Sintos Coloma and Audre Lorde. These authors' stories challenge the persistent myth that development and learning best take place in the nuclear family unit. Instead of upholding the idea that father knows best, Coloma and Lorde tell us that queer youth of color can benefit from embracing the activist sociality that arises in mentoring activities of queer collaborations, dialogues, relationships, and textual zaps. In the spirit of activist pursuits, we must learn to transgress boundaries that exist between cultural identities, and in so doing, mentoring coalitions can work together to aid queer youth of all cultures. Such mentoring relations offer a bevy of routes towards the future, yet as we take to the connectivities of mentor-mentee relations, we also should be mindful of the allure of seeing mentoring as a cure-all to the problems created by classist, heteronormative, and racist formations. As Coloma and Lorde tell, mentoring relations can fall apart—as in the case of Audre's intimacy with Eudora—which nevertheless leads us to learn from their challenges. Like in many other postmodern tales, the unities of the past will come apart at times, but not all is lost in the process of this fragmentation. From their relationship's disintegration, rises the poetic phoenix Audre, who ultimately mentors her readers to seek out knowledge and be tenacious in the face of socio-political adversity.

In terms of narrative, the scholars Bernadette Marie Calafell and Richard G. Jones elucidate how personal stories can empower people to address the "master narratives that shape and proscribe us."[69] In effect, personal narratives enable us to intervene in injustice, leading queer youth to perceive a wider variety of possibilities for designing their own paths. As Coloma and Lorde instruct, it behooves us to think like an activist and utilize the resources of our queer social spheres, which provide platforms for development and insights. These queer social spheres grant us the means to craft a new bricolage of social learning, which allows us to look beyond the inculcated educational approaches that often inhibit innovative thinking. Developing such possible futures is dependent on several things, such as looking beyond heteronarratives, creating a culture that supports queer mentoring, and recognizing that queer youth of color also hold the potential to mentor others about what they need. To advance this culture of mentoring, we should neither presume old forms of learning to be superior, nor discount our influence on one another. Consequently, we should imagine the social relations of queer mentoring in a more hybrid and multi-faceted way, nurturing formations that can exist and thrive beyond the confines of problematic myths that undermine our cultures. Hence by embracing the synthesis taking place in our lives and all around us, we will be creating a more just social sphere that is better prepared to foster the development, self-determination, and well-being of queer youth of color.

Notes

1. Dominique Johnson and Billie Gastic, "Natural Mentoring in the Lives of Sexual Minority Youth," *Journal of Community Psychology* 43, no. 4 (2015): 395-407; Michael Sadowski, "Foundations of Queer Voice: Silence and Support in Schools, Communities, Families and Society," in *In a Queer Voice: Journeys of Resilience from Adolescence to Adulthood* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013); Christina M. Van Puymbroeck, "The Mentoring Web: A Model To Increase Retention of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Undergraduates," Research Report #14-01 (Counseling Center: University of Maryland, 2001), archived in US Department of Education Educational Resources Information Center, accessed April 19, 2016, http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED456716.pdf; Christopher J. Alexander, "Mentoring for Gay and Lesbian Youth," *Gay & Lesbian Social Services* 10, no. 2 (January 1, 1999): 89-92.

2. Like the scholar Siobhan Somerville, I utilize the term "queer" to refer to the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and other sexual minority people. I also use "queer" to unite sexualities under one sign for the purpose of speaking about the way that several groups experience similar conditions. See: Siobhan B. Somerville, "Queer," in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, eds. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 187.
3. See, for instance: Jill Capuzzo, "Pressured School District Reverses, Allowing Play on Murder of Gay Student," *New York Times* 11 Aug. 2007: B3, accessed May 12, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/11/nyregion/11laramie.html; Steven Greenhouse, "Texas School District Is Sued Over A Gay-Straight Club," *The New York Times* 2 Feb. 2003: 20, accessed: May 12, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/02/us/texas-school-district-is-sued-over-a-gay-straight-club.html.
4. Karma R. Chávez, "ACT UP, Haitian Migrants and Alternative Memories of HIV/AIDS," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98, no. 1 (2012): 63-68; Stewart Landers, Jim Pickett, Leo Rennie, Steve Wakefield, "Community Perspectives on Developing a Sexual Health Agenda for Gay and Bisexual Men" *AIDS and Behavior* (2011): 101-106.
5. Margo V. Perkins, *Autobiography as Activism: Three Black Women of the Sixties* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 10; Martha Watson, *Lives of Their Own: Rhetorical Dimensions in the Autobiographies of Women Activists* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).
6. Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (New York: The Crossing Press, 1982), no pagination.
7. Roland Sintos Coloma, "Fragmented Entries, Multiple Selves: In Search of a Place to Call Home," in *Restoried Selves: Autobiographies of Queer Asian/Pacific American Activists*, ed. Kevin Kumashiro (New York: Haworth, 2004).
8. Sue Golding, *The Eight Technologies of Otherness* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
9. Jim Elledge and David Groff, *Who's Yer Daddy? Gay Writers Celebrate Their Mentors and Forerunners* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).
10. Linda Stone Fish and Rebecca G. Harvey, *Nurturing Queer Youth* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), 207.
11. While some critics may not see the discourse of "the family" as being a propitious idiom in queer contexts, many LGBTQ people continue to utilize the concepts of family as a means to explain their social relations. The history of this debate is a lengthy and a provocative dialogue, yet due to constraints it cannot be addressed at length here. See: Katie L. Acosta, *Amigas y Amantes: Sexually Nonconforming Latinas Negotiate Family* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2013) 131.
12. Gary Remafedi, *Death by Denial: Studies of Suicide in Gay and Lesbian Teenagers* (Boston: Alyson Books, 1994).
13. Jason D. P. Bird, Lisa Kuhns, and Robert Garofalo, "The Impact of Role Models on Health Outcomes for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 50 (2012): 353-357.
14. Ellen D. B. Riggle and Sharon Rostosky, *A Positive View of LGBTQ: Embracing Identity and Cultivating Well-being* (Lanham: Roman and Littlefield, 2014), 109-115.

15. Kathleen F. McConnell, "Connective Tissue, Critical Ties: Academic Collaboration as a Form and Ethics of Kinship," *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* 8, no. 5 (2012): 12-29; Krishna Pattisapu and Bernadette Marie Calafell, "(Academic) Families of Choice: Queer Relationality, Mentoring, and Critical Communication Pedagogy," in *Identity and Communication Research: Intercultural Reflections and Future Directions*, eds. Nilanjana Bardhan and Mark Orbe (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 51-67.
16. Jean Fernandez, "Hybrid Narratives: The Making of Character and Narrative Authority in Rudyard Kipling's 'His Chance in Life,'" *Victorian Literature and Culture* 36, no. 2 (2008): 343; Holly E. Martin, *Writing Between Cultures: A Study of Hybrid Writing in Ethnic Literature of the United States* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 2011); Vivian M. May, "Thinking from the Margins, Acting at the Intersections: Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice from the South*," *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 19, no. 2 (2004).
17. While recognizing that some critics believe texts are recognizable as particular genres, other critics believe clear lines between genres cannot be drawn due to the ways that such labeling can be arbitrary and limiting.
18. Lorde, *Zami*, 7.
19. Coloma, "Fragmented Entries, Multiple Selves," 19.
20. Monica B. Pearl, "'Sweet Home': Audre Lorde's *Zami* and the Legacies of American Writing," *Journal of American Studies* 43, no. 2 (2009).
21. For discussions of intersectionality see: Patricia Hill Collins, "It's All In the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race and Nation," *Hypatia* 13, no. 3 (1998): 62-82; Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991): 2141-99; Shinsuke Eguchi, "Cross-National Identity Transformation: Becoming a Gay 'Asian-American' Man," *Sexuality and Culture* 15 (2011): 31; José Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1999).
22. Juana María Rodríguez, "Queer Sociality and Other Sexual Fantasies," *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 17, no. 2-3 (2011): 331-348; Shaka McGlotten, *Virtual Intimacies: Media, Affect and Queer Sociality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013).
23. Kath Weston, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).
24. José Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 128.
25. Coloma, "Fragmented Entries, Multiple Selves," 24-25.
26. Kyung-Hee Choi, Jay Paul, George Ayala, Ross Boylan, and Steven E. Gregorich, "Experiences of Discrimination and Their Impact on the Mental Health Among African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Latino Men Who Have Sex With Men," *American Journal of Public Health* 103, no. 5 (March 2013): 1-7; Brian Mustanski, Robert Garofalo, and Erin Emerson, "Mental Health Disorders Psychological Distress and Suicidality in a Diverse Sample of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth," *American Journal of Public Health* 100, no. 12 (December 2010): 2426-32.
27. Perkins, *Autobiography as Activism,* 10.
28. Ibid., xiii.

29. Lorde, *Zami*, 3.
30. Roland Sintos Coloma, "Summary," Linkedin, accessed on May16, 2016, http://www.linkedin.com/in/roland-sintos-coloma-692872100.
31. Pattisapu and Calafell, "(Academic) Families of Choice," 65.
32. Audre Lorde, "Audre Lorde," in *Black Women Writers at Work: Conversations*, ed. Claudia Tate (New York: Continuum, 1983), 108.
33. To distinguish between the textual persona of Audre Lorde and her authorial self, I will refer to the persona as "Audre," while calling the author "Lorde."
34. Pearl, "'Sweet Home': Audre Lorde's *Zami*," 300-301.
35. Lorde, *Zami*, 24.
36. Ibid., 83-84.
37. Ibid., 82
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., 81.
40. Ibid., 106.
41. Richie Neil Hao, Bryant Keith Alexander, Bernadette Marie Calafell, Kate Willink, Amy Kilgard, and John T. Warren, "Building Community in the Academy Through Mentoring: Reflections and Directions." *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* 8, no. x5 (2012): 41-2.
42. Lorde, *Zami*, 82.
43. Jean E. Rhodes, *Stand by Me: The Risks and Rewards of Mentoring Today's Youth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 123.
44. Lorde, *Zami*, 170.
45. Ibid., 209.
46. See Margaret Wooster Freeman, "'Efforts of Affection': Mentorship and Friendship in Moore and Bishop," in *American Literary Mentors*, eds. Irene Goldman-Price and Melissa McFarland Pennell (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1999), 147-160; Thomas Simmons, *Erotic Reckonings: Mastery and Apprenticeship in the Work of Poets and Lovers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).
47. Lorde, *Zami*, 172.
48. Ibid., 255.
49. Ibid., 256.
50. Bernadette Marie Calafell, "Mentoring and Love: An Open Letter," *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 7, no. 4 (2007): 425-441.
51. Coloma, "Fragmented Entries, Multiple Selves," 23.
52. Ibid., 19.
53. Ibid., 25.
54. Ibid., 19.
55. Ibid., 26.
56. Ibid.
57. Judith Roof, *Come As You Are: Sexuality and Narrative* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 161.
58. Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 143-160.
59. Coloma, "Fragmented Entries, Multiple Selves," 26.
60. Ibid., 25.
61. See: Tom Donaghy, "Mentors Needed," *OUT* 15, no. 7 (January 2007): 42-46; Shilpa Mehta, "Mulling It Over: Lesbian Role Models," *Hot Wire: The Journal of Women's*

Music and Culture 7, no. 3 (September 1991): 44.

62. Tom Donaghy, "Mentors Needed," 42.
63. Coloma, "Fragmented Entries, Multiple Selves," 24.
64. Ibid.
65. Karma R. Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013).
66. Coloma, "Fragmented Entries, Multiple Selves," 28.
67. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 30.
68. Dr. Kevin Kumashiro speaks to this matter of "partial stories" in his provocative Preface to *Restoried Selves: Autobiographies of Queer Asian / Pacific American Activists*. (Kevin Kumashiro, "Preface," *Restoried Selves: Autobiographies of Queer Asian / Pacific American Activists,* ed. Kevin Kumashiro (Binghamton: Harrington Park Press, 2004) xxv.
69. Richard G. Jones and Bernadette Marie Calafell, "Contesting Neoliberalism Through Critical Pedagogy, Intersectional Reflexivity and Personal Narrative: Queer Tales of Academia," *Journal of Homosexuality* 59, no. 7 (2012): 962.

Bio



Ed Chamberlain

Edward Chamberlain researches how artists and intellectuals represent social struggle in American, Caribbean and transnational cultural contexts. His research explains how vulnerable populations, such as LGBTQ youth, respond to the experiences of inequality and well-being in written and visual narratives. His research articles have been published in the journals *English Language Notes*, *CLCWeb*, and *Otherness*.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Lateral
JOURNAL OF THE CULTURAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Chris A. Eng and Amy K. King, "Introduction to Forum, "Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities.," *Lateral 5.1* (2016).

https://doi.org/10.25158/L5.1.6

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Forum: Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities
Issue 5.1 (Spring 2016)

Forum Introduction: Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities

Chris A Eng and Amy K King

ABSTRACT Edited by Chris A Eng and Amy K King, this first of a two-part forum identifies and contemplates the emergent potential of four analytics for imagining alternative humanities. Structuring thought across disciplines, these analytics resonate strongly with the specific ways that cultural studies shifted, developed, and refined its ideas and focus: J. Kēhaulani Kauanui takes up settler colonialism; Kyla Wazana Tompkins, New Materialism; Julie Avril Minich, disability; and Jodi Melamed, institutionality.

> Our contemporary moment is so replete with assumptions that freedom is made universal through liberal political enfranchisement and the globalization of capitalism that it has become difficult to write or imagine alternative knowledges, to act on behalf of alternative projects of communities. Within this context, it is necessary to act within but to think beyond our received humanist tradition and, all the while, imagine a much more complicated set of stories about the emergence of the now, in which what is foreclosed as unknowable is forever saturating the "what-can-be-known." We are left with the project of visualizing, mourning, and thinking "other humanities" within the received genealogy of "the human."
>
> —Lisa Lowe, "The Intimacies of Four Continents"[1]

Scholars of postcolonial studies and minority discourses have pointed toward the violences of the humanities, in which knowledge and the ideals of freedom are conceived around "Western Man." Undergirding the bases of our intellectual practices and assumptions, this centering of Man not only structurally reproduces hierarchical valuations on race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, and nationality, but also fails to account for the production of these social differences as the foundational violence upon which Man is (re)constituted. Thinkers including Denise Ferreira da Silva, Franz Fanon, Roderick Ferguson, Lisa Lowe, Alexander Weheliye, and Sylvia Wynter have challenged the epistemologies of Enlightenment philosophy and the legacies of liberal humanism that continually render other ways of being and living unthinkable and impossible.[2] As scholar-teachers positioned across intimately interconnected fields of cultural studies, American studies, and critical ethnic studies oriented toward politically radical intellectual work, how do we grapple with these legacies? What forms of new methods and knowledges can attend to and challenge the material violences that these legacies have wrought? In critiquing the impasse of working within liberal notions of freedom under contemporary global capitalism, Lisa Lowe enjoinders us to collectively conceptualize "'other humanities' within the received genealogy of 'the human.'" Given the dominant nature of humanities and its ideas, this task of imagining and enacting alternative humanities is more urgent and difficult than ever. Taking up Lowe's call for radically re-envisioning the humanities by

rethinking the terms of the human, the emergent critical analytics we consider in this forum both trace and call further attention to resonant inquiries that collectively attend to, interrogate, and shift assumptions about the bodies of the human(ities) underwriting our scholarly engagements—the body of the nation, the human body, and the body of the academic discipline.

This forum examines how movements in scholarship around settler colonialism, new materialisms, disability, and institutionality have profoundly unsettled key foundations of scholarly inquiry. We argue that these emergent critical analytics provide pivotal points of entry into the task of radically reconceptualizing the dominant bodies of the human(ities). The emergent, as Raymond Williams describes it, can only be apprehended retrospectively for what appears to be emergent can become incorporated into the dominant and lose its oppositional potential.[3] Thus, what appears in Williams's terms as a sense of the purely emergent–as oppositional to dominant processes of incorporation–may perhaps be best seen as an ideal. Noting the difficulties of this sense of the emergent as oppositional rather than merely alternative to the dominant, Williams suggests that we might attend to and create new forms and conditions of "pre-emergence" that facilitate such possibility.[4] This forum identifies and collectively contemplates the critical potential of four analytics for providing the conditions for such pre-emergence. In this sense, we understand that the analytics themselves are inherently contradictory and that their meanings, functions, and effects can materialize in divergent ways. Thus each scholar reassesses these terms precisely to mine the contestations each indexes, elucidating both how their deployment might unintentionally replicate the tenets of the human that they aim to interrogate and the ways in which the existing theoretical and political work coalescing around these terms gesture toward radical pathways for alternative humanities.

To approach these double objectives, we contemplate the following questions:

1. What, if any, common trends around the deployment of these analytics have worked to inadvertently reaffirm the dominant frameworks of the humanities and their unequal power structures?
2. What have been some of the most promising emergent practices around these terms —settler colonialism, new materialisms, disability, and institutionality—that problematize these dominant models?
3. Keeping the tensions between these first two questions in mind, how might scholarly practices work to maintain a critical self-reflectivity that continually undermines the problematics of the dominant and foregrounds the emergent critical energy around these analytics?
4. In what ways might scholar-teachers account for the (re)thinking of these analytics in their pedagogical practices?

In this sense, the articles in this forum work through the pitfalls of replicating the dominant and provide critical methods for potentially maintaining friction in these incorporative maneuvers.

During the last two decades, the putative transnational turn across a number of disciplines has compelled interrogation of the privileging of the nation-state as the ideal object of analysis by examining histories of empire and colonialism. While the transnational turn has provided generative new approaches in many fields, scholars have cautioned against not only comparative approaches that sanctify the primacy of the nation-state as discrete units, but also fundamental ideas about belonging and relationality that privilege the epistemologies of the nation-state and its constitutive racialized violences. At the same time, invocations of settler colonialism in scholarship can

also unwittingly reproduce this privileging of the nation, especially when included purely as a citational practice. Instead, J. Kēhaulani Kauanui discusses the distinctive shifts toward examining Patrick Wolfe's theory of settler colonialism as 'a structure, not an event.' Kauanui argues that a substantive engagement with settler colonialism also demands a deep rethinking of the associated concept of indigeneity–distinct from race, ethnicity, culture, and nation(ality)–along with the field of Native American and Indigenous Studies.

Theorizations of new materialisms and disability have been pivotal as two interconnected but distinct efforts in interrogating the liberal conceptions of the normative human body that rationalized projects of Western imperialism. However, as history has shown, not all modes of rethinking the human are inherently revolutionary. Kyla Wazana Tompkins and Julie Avril Minich both caution against how certain critical reassessments of the human body can replicate uneven power structures. Tompkins questions the structures informing claims of newness posed by discussions of "New Materialism." She discusses the troubling ways in which these discourses, in turning toward the post- or non-human, can ironically reinforce assumptions about a universal human subject and elide considerations of gender, race, and power. Also addressing the elision of race in disability studies, Minich in turn traces the histories of normative care of bodies that are seen as personal/private property. Advising against the potential ways in which scholarship might take up disability by fetishizing difference and reaffirming dominant models of able-bodiedness, Minich calls for work to be first and foremost accountable to people with disabilities: this means making knowledge accessible. Moreover, Minich reminds us that much of the labor for accessibility is individualized, as some of the most vulnerable members of academic departments often take up this labor without institutional support. In order for knowledge to be accessible, Minich stresses, the labor of accessibility must be addressed on an institutional level.

Lastly, Jodi Melamed reassesses the analytic of institutionality, which has largely been theorized as a dominant tool of the university in incorporating the emergent and muting the oppositional. In particular, scholars in American and cultural studies have noted how universities responded to the revolutionary calls of radical social movements by institutionalizing ethnic and gender studies into compartmentalized sets of knowledge production. In so doing, the university worked to manage minority difference through flat notions of representation rather than redistribution. The interdisciplines of ethnic and gender studies then became additives to the humanities, upholding the status quo rather than compelling a radical re-envisioning of these academic structures altogether. On an even more macro level, Melamed identifies dominant discussions of institutionality that see global neoliberalism as a new, all-totalizing force. In problematizing how these theorizations elide considerations of the historical conditions of racial capitalism that make possible the 'global,' Melamed also excavates a genealogy of radical resistance that might allow us to rethink institutionality toward collective solidarity.

Call for/and Response

To formally reflect this project of imagining institutionality otherwise toward alternative humanities, this forum will stage conversations between established scholars and emerging scholars (students and junior faculty). Conventional institutional structures often premise a generational approach that privileges linear models of academic development, which can often be reproduced even within formal and informal practices of mentorship. In contrast, we aim to lateralize this relationship by juxtaposing comments by scholars across various institutional positions and intellectual trajectories side-by-side so that unexpected new relationalities may arise from these collaborations. In what ways might the stakes and uses of these analytics—settler colonialism, new materialisms,

disability, and institutionality—in research and teaching shift based on one's professional position and locale? How might students, recent graduates, contingent faculty, nontenured or junior scholars approach these analytics otherwise?

To further contemplate these inquiries, we now solicit responses (1000-2000 words) from emergent student and junior faculty voices. Submissions may (a) respond to one or more of the four analytics posed here or (b) propose another analytic in line with the objectives outlined in this forum. Responses should be submitted for consideration to Chris A. Eng (ceng@gradcenter.cuny.edu) and Amy K. King (aking83@gatech.edu) by October 1, 2016. We invite further conversations to collectively reflect on and strategize about the continual practices needed for these emergent critical analytics and the models necessary for materializing alternative humanities.

Notes

1. Lisa Lowe, "The Intimacies of Four Continents," in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 208.
2. Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 1963); Roderick A. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Sylvia Wynter, "The Ceremony Must Be Found: After Humanism," *boundary 2* 12, no. 3 (1984): 19–70; Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation–An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2004): 257–337; Katherine McKittrick, ed., *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).
3. Of course, in her larger monograph, Lisa Lowe also makes use of Williams's concepts to chart the multivalence of intimacy within a larger political economy. Our project here thinks alongside her engagement with Williams's in considering the dominant, residual, and emergent intimacies. See Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*.
4. Raymond Williams, "Dominant, Residual, and Emergent," *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 121-127.

Bio



Chris A Eng

Chris Eng is Assistant Professor of English and the Emerson Faculty Fellow at Syracuse University. He received his PhD in English from The Graduate Center, CUNY. He is currently working on his book manuscript entitled *Dislocating Camps: On Queer Aesthetics, State Power & Asian/Americanist Critique*; its dissertation form won the CLAGS 2016 Paul Monette-Roger Horwitz Dissertation Prize. His writings have appeared in *Journal of Asian American Studies*, *Lateral*, and *Women & Performance*. Chris previously served on the MLA Delegate Assembly and currently chairs the Queer Studies Section of the Association for Asian American Studies. In 2016–2017, he was a Post-Doctoral Research Associate in Asian American Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Bio



Amy K King

Amy K. King is a Marion L. Brittain Postdoctoral Fellow at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Her current book project places depictions of women at the center of her inquiry to interrogate their involvement in empires throughout the "New World." King argues that a substantial number of recent written and visual texts employ depictions of violence between women to illuminate grotesquely violent cultural norms enacted on and continuing beyond plantation settings. Portions of this work appear in the edited collection *Reading/Speaking/Writing the Mother Text: Essays on Caribbean Women's Writing* (Demeter Press 2015). King also has two recent essays in *Mississippi Quarterly* and *south: a scholarly journal* that reconsider comparative methodologies for hemispheric American studies.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Lateral
JOURNAL OF THE CULTURAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, "'A structure, not an event': Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity," *Lateral 5.1* (2016).

https://doi.org/10.25158/L5.1.7

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Forum: Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities
Issue 5.1 (Spring 2016)
Settler Colonialism

"A Structure, Not an Event": Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity

J. Kēhaulani Kauanui

ABSTRACT J. Kēhaulani Kauanui discusses the distinctive shifts toward examining Patrick Wolfe's theory of settler colonialism as 'a structure, not an event.' Kauanui argues that a substantive engagement with settler colonialism also demands a deep rethinking of the associated concept of indigeneity–distinct from race, ethnicity, culture, and nation(ality)–along with the field of Native American and Indigenous Studies.

I begin this essay[1] by unpacking what I mean by "enduring indigeneity" in my title and what that means to an understanding of settler colonialism. Here I use it in two senses: first, that indigeneity itself is enduring—that the operative logic of settler colonialism may be to "eliminate the native," as the late English scholar Patrick Wolfe brilliantly theorized, but that indigenous peoples exist, resist, and persist; and second, that settler colonialism is a structure that endures indigeneity, as it holds out against it.

Wolfe's essay "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native"[2] is often cited as the principal work representing the concept and theory of the settler colonial analytic. And although Wolfe insisted on making it clear time and again that he did not create the field of settler colonial studies—that Native scholars did—within the field of American Studies (as just one example), he tends to be most frequently cited as if he had. Indeed, this one article of his (although not his first writing on the subject, nor the last) also seems to be the most cited, perhaps because it offers so much in one piece by distinguishing settler colonialism from genocide, contrasting settler colonialism from franchise colonialism, and —through comparative work focused on Australia, Israel-Palestine, and the United States —showing how the logic of settler colonialism is premised on the elimination of indigenous peoples.

As Wolfe noted, because settler colonialism "destroys to replace", it is "inherently eliminatory but not invariably genocidal."[3] He was careful to point out that settler colonialism is not simply a form of genocide, since there are cases of genocide without settler colonialism, and because "elimination refers to more than the summary liquidation of Indigenous peoples, though it includes that."[4] Hence, he suggested that "structural genocide" avoids the question of degree and enables an understanding of the relationships between spatial removal, mass killings, and biocultural assimilation.[5] In other words, the logic of elimination of the native is about the elimination of the native *as native*. And yet, to exclusively focus on the settler colonial without any meaningful engagement with the indigenous—as has been the case in how Wolfe's work has been cited—can (re)produce another form of "elimination of the native." Because settler colonialism is a land-centered project entailing permanent settlement, as Wolfe points

out in this same essay, "Settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event."[6]

In this essay, I want to revisit the oft cited phrase from Wolfe's work—that settler colonialism is a structure not an event—to explore why it is that the same locution often seems to stand-in for a serious engagement of his theory and is also perhaps the most neglected aspect of his theory. Moreover, I want to feature a discussion of indigeneity as a counterpart analytic to settler colonialism and offer some of my critical reflections as to why any meaningful engagement with theories of settler colonialism—whether Wolfe's or others'—necessarily needs to tend to the question of indigeneity. Settler Colonial Studies does not, should not, and cannot replace Indigenous Studies.

At a panel during the 2015 annual meeting of the American Studies Association (ASA), "The Settler Colonialism Analytic: A Critical Reappraisal," Alyosha Goldstein identified how Wolfe's project has been reduced to this phrase, among a couple others, and how this reference has come to index a certain approach within American Studies, among other fields.[7] Goldstein has identified some of the problematic aspects of this institutionalization of the work as a subfield, including the effects when these refrains become extracted and circulated; they foreclose or bracket other formations—such as franchise colonialism and slavery—in ways that may sidestep how they are not only entangled, but also are co-constituted. He also noted that shallow references to the theory too often treat it as a self-contained type that can travel, or that it is totally discrete, rather than intertwined with other social processes. Goldstein also suggested that the ways in which the citational practice of the theory is enacted tends to produce a binary of settler and native.[8]

In the context of American Studies, Robert Warrior laid out the relationship between Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) and Settler Colonial Studies, "and also the enthymemic context of raising the issue, American studies." In "Settler Colonial Studies and Native American and Indigenous Studies," a position paper presented at the 2015 annual meeting of the ASA, he documented the ratio of Settler Colonial Studies panels and Indigenous Studies panels on the annual programs of the ASA since 1997. Warrior explained, "I had a growing anxiety, however (based not just on the program committee meeting, but from other conversations and observations), that the rise of Settler Colonial Studies has become—not everywhere by any means, but in some circles—an answer to the chronic need for more attention to and awareness of Native and Indigenous studies."[9] He identified two exceptional years when there were more Native-focused sessions, both of which he links to the presence (and labor) of indigenous scholars: at the 1998 meeting in Seattle, which he attributed largely to Ned Blackhawk's role on the program committee (while he was a graduate student), and a decade later in 2008 at the meeting in Albuquerque when Philip Deloria was president.

That Settler Colonial Studies seems to have gained more traction than NAIS within the field of American Studies is perhaps ironic given that it was NAIS scholars who arguably introduced settler colonialism as an analytic to the field of American Studies in the first place. And this was because NAIS was not being taken seriously enough in the ASA, and American Studies as a field has privileged the frameworks of postcolonialism and multiculturalism. Also, within works attentive to minoritarian discourse, indigeneity is rarely distinguished from race if mentioned at all. For years, it seemed as if scholars—not only in American Studies, but in related fields, as well as even (or especially?) American history—could barely speak of US colonialism. Warrior mentioned the "slog" of helping American Studies figure out what its relationship to Native Studies can and should be. Indeed, Warrior has been a key scholar in this endeavor.

The 2002 annual meeting of the American Studies Association included a panel, "American (Indian) Studies: Can the ASA be an Intellectual Home?," which featured Robert Warrior, Jean O'Brien, and Philip Deloria. This set of presentations, later published as a forum in the *American Quarterly*, examined the question of whether or not the association in particular, and therefore the field in general, was conducive for the growth and development of Native Studies. As one answer to the question, by 2005, Warrior set out to launch a steering committee to found a new association—that which became the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA), founded in 2008.[10]

Why have few scholars taken up the question of indigeneity when it is something that implicates most aspects of American culture, politics, policy, and society because the United States is a settler colonial state? How can one understand the US Republic without accounting for the violent removal of the original occupants, indigenous peoples—the preexisting sovereign nations? Since attentiveness to indigenous peoples always entails an examination of prior occupancy, sovereignty, and nationhood, many scholars have arguably relegated it to the field of Native American Studies. Certainly, the study of indigenous peoples is foundational to American history, culture, society, and politics. Understanding settler colonialism as a structure exposes the fact that colonialism cannot be relegated to the past, even though the past-present should be historicized. The notion that colonialism is something that ends with the dissolving of the British colonies when the original thirteen became the early US states has its counterpart narrative in the myth that indigenous peoples ended when colonialism ended.

Works on local settler history and settler governmentality explain the structure. Jean O'Brien, in *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England*, theorizes the persistent myth of the vanishing Indian.[11] She argues that local histories became a primary means by which European Americans asserted their own modernity while denying it to Indian peoples. O'Brien examined more than six hundred local histories from Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Ranging from pamphlets to multivolume treatments, these narratives shared a preoccupation with establishing the region as the center of an Anglo-Saxon nation and the center of a modern American culture. They also insisted (often in lamenting tones) that New England's original inhabitants had become extinct, even though many Indians still lived in the very towns being chronicled. Erasing and then memorializing Indian peoples also served a more practical colonial goal: refuting Indian claims to land and rights. O'Brien found that in order to convince themselves that the Indians had vanished despite their continued presence, local historians and their readers embraced notions of racial purity rooted in the century's scientific racism and saw living Indians as "mixed" and therefore no longer "truly Indian." Adaptation to modern life on the part of Indian peoples was used as further evidence of their demise. But Indians did not—and have not—accepted this effacement. This formula persists as a pervasive part of the contemporary normalization of settler colonialism.

Taking settler colonialism as a structure seriously allows US scholars, for example, to challenge the normalization of dispossession as a "done deal" relegated to the past rather than ongoing. Mark Rifkin's *Settler Common Sense* is useful here.[12] He examines how, even while settler colonialism can be characterized as a structure, a system, and a logic, affective networks need to be explored as part of understanding how settler colonial governmentality comes to be lived as the self-evident condition of possibility for (settler) being. Examining how canonical American writers take part in the legacy of displacing Native Americans, he asks, how do varied administrative projects of settlement and accompanying legal categories, geographies, and subjectivities become part of the everyday life of non-Natives? Rifkin addresses that feeling of givenness and the kinds of

social trajectories from which it emerges and which it engenders. Instead of suggesting that quotidian forms of settler sensation, self-hood, and possession follow obviously from policy and official legal mandates, he argues that the (shifting) boundaries of settler governance help provide orientation, inclination, and momentum for non-Native experiences of the everyday.

What does it mean to engage the assertion that settler colonialism is a "structure not an event"? One obvious case is the Nakba as an ongoing process—rather than an isolated historical moment of catastrophe marking the 1948 Palestinian exodus, when Jewish Zionists expelled more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs from their homes and homeland during the war that forged the state of Israel.[13] In North America, there are numerous attempts to remove indigenous peoples from their lands for corporate resource extraction ranging from oil to minerals and water, causing environmental devastation with genocidal implications. One example is Alaska's Bristol Bay mine project, which has been described as "Ground zero for the next big environmental fight."[14] It is a dispute over a proposed copper and gold mine near Alaska's Bristol Bay—a remote area that is home to several Alaskan native villages and nearly half of the world's sockeye salmon. Six native governing entities have asked the EPA to invoke its powers under the Clean Water Act to block the mine on the grounds that it would harm the region's waterways, fish and wildlife.[15]

On the flip side, in asserting indigeneity as a category of analysis, the question of its substance always arises. Just as critical race studies scholars insist that race is a useful category that is a distinct social formation rather than a derivative category emerging from class and/or ethnicity, indigeneity is a category of analysis that is distinct from race, ethnicity, and nationality—even as it entails elements of all three of these. However, indigenous peoples' assertions of distinction and cultural differences are often heard as merely essentialist and therefore resembling static identities based on fixed inherent qualities. As such, what remains for some scholars as well as national and international governmental actors is the question as to whether indigeneity has any substance that can be used as a foundation to make a claim. In terms of both cultural and political struggles, one of the tenets of any claim to indigeneity is that indigenous sovereignty—framed as a responsibility more often than a right—is derived from original occupancy, or at least prior occupancy. Like race, indigeneity is a socially constructed category rather than one based on the notion of immutable biological characteristics.

But taking up indigeneity as a category of analysis is not one and the same as the study of indigenous peoples. For example, within the fraught debates about US immigration policy, bringing indigeneity into the frame necessarily exposes nativism and how it undergirds the US as a settler colonial society. In another example, during Occupy Wall Street, indigenous activists and critics challenged the use of the term "occupy" in relation to an actual history of settler colonial occupation. As Joanne Barker has fiercely noted, this indigenous dispossession was the historical precondition for Wall Street itself—a street with a wall built by the Dutch, in part, to keep the Lenape people out of their homeland in what became lower Manhattan—what has become a metonym for the US finance industry—all built on indigenous dispossession.[16] This history and present perfectly illustrate what Wolfe meant by settler colonialism as "a structure, not an event." Still, it cannot be a stand-in for the other Lenape histories and for focus on their culture and life ways. Meanwhile the Lenape people self-govern outside of their traditional homeland of Manahatta (now known as Manhattan)—as far as Kansas, Wisconsin, Oklahoma, and other cities—where they continue to exist as native governing entities—while other clans of the Lenape remain in their expansive traditional territory from other parts of what is New York, through New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware.[17]

Since settler colonialism is a structure and not an event, and because indigenous peoples are still subject to that structure—an ongoing genocidal project—NAIS must be engaged in relation to Settler Colonial Studies for any meaningful examination of the US state in the context of American Studies, Cultural Studies, and other related fields.

[Editors' note: Responses to this piece by Beenash Jafri ("Ongoing Colonial Violence in Settler States") and Melissa Gniadek ("The Times of Settler Colonialism") are published in *Lateral* 6.1 (Spring 2017), with a response by Kauanui.]

Acknowledgements

I want to thank the co-editors of this special forum for their encouragement. I also offer a big mahalo to Rana Barakat for reading earlier drafts of this piece and offering her intellectual and moral support. The last edits of this essay were completed in the immediate wake of Patrick Wolfe's death. He was not only a colleague; he was a friend who will be missed dearly for his important work, humor, and comradeship.

Notes

1. This essay is based on comments presented on a roundtable, "New Directions in American Studies," held at the 2014 annual meeting of the American Studies Association.
2. Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (Dec. 2006): 387–409.
3. Ibid, 387.
4. Ibid, 390.
5. Ibid, 403.
6. Ibid., 388. Wolfe's earlier work also advanced the same analysis: "The colonizers come to stay—invasion is a structure not an event." See *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology* (London and New York City: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1998), 2. Wolfe's first book provided a history of settler colonialism in Australia through a history of anthropology that explores the links between metropolitan anthropological theory and local colonial politics from the 19th century up to the late 20th century, settler colonialism, and the ideological and sexual regimes that characterize it. The work is an incisive analysis of the politics of anthropological knowledge given its production through the historical dispossession and continuing oppression of indigenous peoples.
7. Also, Wolfe did not coin the concept of settler colonialism, although through his work, the analytic has gained important traction and visibility. That work includes his long time, direct intellectual engagement with scholars in Native American and Indigenous Studies, enabling an ongoing conversation—much of which has been US-based—which has enabled visibility in the American Studies context. US-based Palestinian academic and civil servant Fayez Sayegh first used the concept in his 1965 work, *Zionist Colonialism in Palestine* (Beirut: Research Center, Palestine Liberation Organization, 1965). Notably, French Marxist scholar Maxime Rodinson addresses it in his book *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* (New York: Monad Press, 1973). And Palestinian scholar Rosemary Sayigh used the framework of settler colonial in her 1979 book, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries; A People's History* (London: Zed Books, 1979). Japanese American scholar J. Sakai also included some treatment of the concept through his 1983 Marxist focus on white workers in *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat* (PM Press, 2014). In 1992, Kanaka Maoli scholar and activist Haunani-Kay Trask wrote about "settlers of

color" in Hawaii and their complicity with colonial structures of domination in "Settlers of Color and 'Immigrant' Hegemony: 'Locals' in Hawai'i," *Amerasia Journal* 26, no. 2 (2000): 1-24. Later, by 2008, Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura co-edited the volume *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), which took up Trask's challenge by documenting the role of Asian locals in Hawaii in relation to Kanaka Maoli. See also, Lorenzo Veracini, *Israel and Settler Society* (London: Pluto Press, 2006). Notably, Nira Yuval-Davis and Ella Shohat, among others, have consistently delineated the distinctions between the postcolonial Third World and the still colonized Fourth World in their respective works, which point to the differences between franchise colonialism and settler colonialism. Nira Yuval-Davis, *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class* (London: Sage, 1995); Ella Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'," in *The Pre-Occupation of Post-Colonial Studies*, eds. Fawzia Afzhal-Khan and Kalpana Rahita Seshadr (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 126-139.

8. Some have also argued that Wolfe's theory sets up a white-black binary that does not resemble other contexts, as though his most cited article applies this to the three case studies he focuses on. His discussion of this binary is specific to his discussion of the United States as he examines the contrasting racialization of indigenous and African peoples. In the case of Australia, the term "black" refers to indigenous peoples—whether hurled as a pejorative by settler descendants or embraced by those who are Aboriginal—and for that reason it cannot be said to be part of a black-white binary. And in the case of Israel/Palestine, there is no operative racial binary between those who are Israeli and those who are Palestinian since one can obviously be both Jewish and Arab, and the dividing line is based on a Zionist appropriation of Judaism—between those who are Jewish and those who are not. This is not an Anglo-specific theory, since the three cases studies Wolfe examines together—Israel/Palestine, the United States and Australia—include colonial settlers who are other than Anglo, namely Celts and Ashkenazi Jews. Additionally, Wolfe responded to the charge of perpetuating a binary between settler and native with his recently edited volume, *The Settler Complex: Recuperating Binarism in Colonial Studies* (Los Angeles: UCLA American Indian Studies Center, 2016).
9. For a critical examination of this split in the Palestinian context, see Rana Barakat, "Writing Palestinian History: Settler Colonialism versus Indigenous Studies," Conference Paper for "Zionism as a Settler Colonial Movement," held by Mada al Karmil, Arab Center for Applied Social Research, December 16, 2015, Ramallah, Palestine. Also, for a look at the ongoing political contestation over the use of the settler colonial analytic in Palestine, see Brenna Bhandar and Rafeef Ziada, "Acts and Omissions: Framing Settler Colonialism in Palestine Studies," *Jadaliyya*, January 14, 2016, accessed January 14, 2016, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/23569/acts-and-omissions_framing-settler-colonialism-in-.
10. Notably, two of those on the ASA session (Warrior along with O'Brien) co-founded the association with me and three other colleagues, K. Tsianina Lomawaima, Jace Weaver, and Ines Hernandez-Avila. And perhaps ironically—or maybe not at all—it was during an ASA meeting (2005) when Warrior and O'Brien invited me to team up with them to build NAISA.
11. Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
12. Mark Rifkin, *Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

13. For works that historically document and theorize the Nakba, see: Walid al Khalidi, "Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no. 1, Special Issue: Palestine 1948, (Autumn 1988), 4-33; Walid al Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2006); Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of Palestinians: the Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Thought* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992); Ahmad Sa'di and Lila Abu Lughod, *Nakba: Palestine, 1948 and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Elias Khoury, "Rethinking the Nakba," *Critical Inquiry* 38 (Winter 2012), 1-18; Ilan Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World Books, 2008).
14. Juliet, Eilperin, "Alaska's Bristol Bay Mine Project: Ground Zero for the Next Big Environmental Fight?", *The Washington Post*, June 1, 2013, accessed January 12, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/alaskas-bristol-bay-mine-project-ground-zero-for-the-next-big-environmental-fight/2013/06/01/c4f528e6-ca00-11e2-9245-773c0123c027_story.html.
15. Ibid.
16. Joanne Barker, "Manna-Hata," *Tequila Sovereign*, October 10, 2011, accessed January 12, 2016, https://tequilasovereign.wordpress.com/2011/10/10/manna-hata/.
17. For more information, one can look at the work of the Manhattan-based Lenape Center, "a non-profit organization based in the ancestral Lenape island of Manhattan whose mission is continuing the Lenape cultural presence." Accessed January 25, 2016, http://www.thelenapecenter.com.

Bio



J. Kēhaulani Kauanui

J. Kēhaulani Kauanui is a Professor of American Studies and Anthropology at Wesleyan University, where she teaches comparative colonialisms, indigenous studies, critical race studies, and anarchist studies. Kauanui's first book is *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Duke University Press, 2008). Her second book is titled, *Paradoxes of Hawaiian Sovereignty*, and is a critical study on land, gender and sexual politics and the tensions regarding indigeneity in relation to statist Hawaiian nationalism (forthcoming with Duke University Press, 2018). Kauanui serves as a radio producer for an anarchist politics show called, "Anarchy on Air." She previously hosted the radio show, "Indigenous Politics," which aired for seven years and was broadly syndicated. She is an original co-founder of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Lateral
JOURNAL OF THE CULTURAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Kyla Wazana Tompkins, "New Materialisms," *Lateral 5.1* (2016).

https://doi.org/10.25158/L5.1.8

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Forum: Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities
Issue 5.1 (Spring 2016)
New Materialist Philosophy

On the Limits and Promise of New Materialist Philosophy

Kyla Wazana Tompkins

ABSTRACT Kyla Wazana Tompkins questions the structures informing claims of newness posed by discussions of "New Materialism." She discusses the troubling ways in which these discourses, in turning toward the post- or non-human, can ironically reinforce assumptions about a universal human subject and elide considerations of gender, race, and power.

It proves somewhat difficult to give a concise outline of this field that is called New Materialism. This is perhaps because the putative "newness" of the field is in fact a resurrection of an old body of thinking that reaches back several centuries to Spinozan

monism and perhaps also because after over a decade of scholarship, this is a field that still seems speculative, emergent, and contestatory.[1] What has been most useful and "new" about the New Materialism, in terms of its relevance to critical race, queer, feminist, socialist, and other modes of minoritarian and left thought, including the "old" materialism, is most definitely just beginning to take shape.

What I will do in this short and necessarily incomplete essay is briefly discuss some of the core tenets of the New Materialism; outline what I see as some of the most useful contributions that the New Materialism has made to my own work and perhaps to minoritarian and left work in general; and then point to some of the issues I see with the New Materialism today.

At its heart, the New Materialism explores the potentially actant qualities of the material and non-human world—New Materialism then is interested in relations between things, objects, phenomena, materialities, and physical bodies, as well as the relations between those things (things with each other) and humans (humans with things). New Materialism also considers the thingness of the human, the materiality of human bodies, and explores consciousness, feeling, affect, and other circulatory and shared social phenomena as they rise out of the substance of the world. Therefore, much New Materialist thought thinks through and with the biological and chemical make-up of the neurological body itself in relation to an increasingly toxic but always-chemical world.

Given these interests, the New Materialism is also interested in speculating about a world in which the human subject is not centered, or even central. The timeliness of this concern, for a species quickly headed towards and in fact already mired in ecological disaster and multiple-species genocide, cannot be over-emphasized. In some New Materialist thinking, particularly the strains of queer of color critique rethinking the relationship between racialized humans and the animal, the current planetary crisis is above all a consequence of the human-centered logic that underlies modern Christological racial capitalism, a logic that produces categories of beings designated as animal or object, in the name of extracting value and labor-energy.

There are, naturally, several schools, lines, and overlapping modalities of New Materialist thought. Working in a line of thought mostly opposed to those emerging from queer of color critique, feminist science studies, and animal studies, is Object Oriented Ontology, which is committed to thinking through the non-relational autonomy of the object world.[2] Largely indifferent if not hostile to work that considers objecthood itself as a historical category with roots in larger political systems like racial capitalism, biopolitics, or colonialism, OOO (as Object Oriented Ontology is often referred to) seeks to theorize object life in its most radically non-relational forms; it is thus committed to a sense of the world, or perhaps the real, as existing prior to, or more importantly, beyond, representational systems such as language. In the OOO conversation, matter can never be apprehended as such: it comes into legibility only as form. In this way, OOO is extraneous to the conversations taking place in feminist, queer, and critical race theory, most of which take as true the idea that the relationship between discursivity and materiality is circular and, in Karen Barad's terms, intra-active.[3]

Adjacent to, but deeply influenced by New Materialist thought, particularly Spinozan ideas of affect, are the fields of media studies that think through a biological, autonomic, and presocial component to human feeling.[4] Intersecting with work in that field as well as critical science studies, a field long shaped if not underwritten by feminist science studies, New Materialist affect and media studies imagines the material world as always and already shaping thought.[5] Such correlationist work—understanding correlationism via Meillassoux here as a circular relationship between perception and world—explores the

shared and social quality of feeling as it is reshaped by media, electronic communication, and various forms of surveillance as they take shape under new regimes of capital.[6] This latter school, particularly when in conversation with what we might call old materialism—that is Marxist and anti-capitalist critiques of liberalism, neoliberalism, and globalization—most usefully offers new inroads into understanding new societies of surveillance and control as they have reshaped politics, biopolitics, and what some call microbiopolitics.

There are reasons to be suspicious of the New Materialism, as indeed there are reasons to be suspicious of any intellectual movement that calls itself "new"—because of course we need to always ask: what is the heroic narrative that its putative "newness" seeks to instantiate? A non-human centered ontology and ethics; a sense of the biological and non-biological world as vital and alive; an idea of the body as having a life and conversation of its own, with itself; and, most centrally and crucially, the idea that planetary life should, must be, and will be at the determinative center of political world-making: these are epistemologies and ontologies that can hardly be said to have recently been invented but rather are familiar to, among others, First Nations and Indigenous peoples; to those humans who have never been quite human enough as explored, for instance, in postcolonial and revolutionary black thought; to some strands of feminist thinking, for instance, de Beauvoir's thinking about the objecthood of women; and to other non-Western medical and spiritual modalities.[7]

And in fact, as a nineteenth centuryist, I can say definitely that not much of the thinking about the active life of matter and the material world, in my research interests on food, drink, and narcotics, seems very surprising: it is precisely in these terms that these substances have been described historically. I want to make clear then that I, alongside many others, worry and am cynical about how the non-white or otherwise minoritarian subjects and indeed history itself, haunt the edges of certain veins within New Materialist thought, sometimes explicitly as the cause of previous intellectual movements that undermine or critique facticity in favor of discourse and sometimes subtly when minoritarian life appears as the ideologically undertheorized yet exemplary object of the New Materialism itself.

It is of deep concern to me how much New Materialism, particularly in Object Oriented Ontology, cannot deal with race; how it ignores or misreads the work of feminist and queer theory; and how the move to a kind of ontology-centered hermeneutic suppresses the question and problem of difference. Here I am particularly worried by the ongoing citation of "the power of language" or "representationalism" as a problem that is corrected by new materialism, as well as worried by loose and vague references to "identitarian thinking" or "identity politics" as a failure to ground and create productive political thought.[8]

It is, however, alongside newer work in the field of American Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Queer Theory that I believe that the so-called New Materialist thought is and can profitably be put to work alongside those projects that have so far been absent. Some examples:

1. The undoing of the subject and of the category of the human. Here I am thinking of the centrality of black feminist and postcolonial thought following Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter that seeks to reorient western epistemologies from the point of view of those who have never been human. Alexander Weheliye's recent work in *Habeas Viscus*, which takes up Spillers's thought to theorize from the rich social space of the enfleshed and putatively pre-social, has been helpful to me; also, and obviously, Mel Chen's work in *Animacies*.[9]

2. The interrogation of mythologies of liberal personhood and sovereign agency by foregrounding the human body's autonomic "prior-ness" to the social world allows for new avenues of political critique; however, dissolving the atomic nature of the self by thinking through bodily affect as collective and social is a political move towards collectivization and distributive agency that should be key. Problematic but still useful work by Nigel Thrift and Kathleen Stewart has helped me here, as has Lauren Berlant's thinking about the genre and the event; Jafari Allen's extension of Audre Lorde's "The Uses of The Erotic" has also been important.[10]

3. A reckoning with planetary thought and the material world—ecological thinking that looks at the interdependence of species with each other, that is observant and attentive to the ways that material becoming is a way of theorizing politics in and of itself. Work in science and technology studies is critical but also helpful is new work that attends to the ecological life of the plantation, to the environmental pre-history of the history of sexuality.

4. Against representation. New Materialist thought can be a tool for analyzing the workings of resistance, power, and capital in the age of surveillance; the best of New Materialist thought examines structures of feeling and offers an analytic of the ways in which power works to move us into a deeper understanding of the micro-workings of biopolitics in the contemporary mediatized political era. That is, New Materialist thought works profitably with Marxist critique to see how politics traffics in mass feeling, and how mass feeling might in turn be harnessed to effect politics.

This is not an exhaustive list or description; it is certainly only a personal and preliminary gesture towards thinking with this field. I have left out trans and disability theory's centrality to posthuman and inhumanist thought; I have not touched on surface reading nor on the Latourian turn. Indeed, as I said at the beginning of this piece, it proves impossible to narrow New Materialist thinking down to only a few strains. However, I would end with one more provocation, which I take from my ongoing conversation with Dana Luciano's work on geology, time, and biopolitics in the nineteenth-century, and which emerges in my own scholarship in my new work on aesthetics, genre, and affect during and following the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906.

In a recent interview, Luciano says that "The most compelling contribution of the new materialisms is not conceptual or analytic, strictly speaking, but sensory. The attempt to attend to the force of liveliness of matter will entail not just a reawakening or redirection of critical attention, but a reorganizing of the senses, departing from the limitations of the Aristotelian model…In re/awakening criticism to alternate sensory dimensions, it holds the potential to expand and enliven—though crucially, not to replace—'old' (historical) materialisms."[11] I find Luciano's provocation—as indeed I find all of her work—to be the most intellectually exciting reading of New Materialism's critical potential. In following Rancière's invitation to direct our attention to the ordering of sense and sensibility within the frame of politics, Luciano's current work points to a critical site wherein the New Materialism might open up into other, more productive, analytics. The attention to the interface between the human and the nonhuman as it yields to and undoes human sensory organization, suggests that New Materialist thinking must necessarily engage radical interdisciplinarity; this in turn brings us back to the provocations of left, feminist, queer, and critical race theory, whose anti-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary energies continue to retain a link with the political movements that produced them.

[Editors' note: Responses to this piece by Chad Shomura ("Exploring the Promise of New Materialisms") and Michelle N. Huang ("Rematerializations of Race") are published in *Lateral* 6.1 (Spring 2017), with a response by Tompkins.]

Notes

1. See Benedict (Baruch) de Spinoza, *Ethics* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006).
2. A small sampling: Graham Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism: Essays and Lectures* (Ropley, UK: John Hunt Publishing, 2010); Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology, Or What It's Like to Be A Thing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Levi R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2011); Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After The End of The World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
3. Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and The Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
4. See Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), and more recently, *The Politics of Affect* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015). Also Steven Shaviro, *Post-Cinematic Affect* (Ropley, UK: Zero Books, 2010) and *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
5. See such critical works in Feminist Science Studies as Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sex/Gender: Biology in a Social World* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Sarah S. Richardson, *Sex Itself: The Search for Male and Female in the Human Genome* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); the previously-mentioned Karen Barad; Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (London: Polity Press, 2013); Elizabeth Grosz, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Luciana Parisi, *Abstract Sex: Philosophy, Biotechnology and the Mutations of Desire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004).
6. The primary critic of correlationism is Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (New York: Continuum, 2009). One insight into the overlaps and divergences between feminist new materialism and the Object Oriented Ontology's hostility to what it terms "correlationism" worth consulting is Rebekah Sheldon's "Form/Matter/Chora: Object-Oriented Ontology and Feminist New Materialism," in *The Nonhuman Turn*, ed. Richard Grusin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 193-222.
7. For a more thorough discussion of these issues and interventions see Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, "Review: Animal: New Directions in the Theorization of Race and Posthumanism," *Feminist Studies* 39, no. 3 (2013), 669-685.
8. See for instance the introduction to Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).
9. Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," in "Culture and Countermemory: The "American" Connection," special issue, *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (Summer, 1987): 64-81; Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation–An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257-337; and more recently, Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014). See also Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).
10. Brian Massumi's work is key here as well as Erin Manning's work on movement, see Manning, *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University

of Minnesota Press, 2006) and *Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009); Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Jafari S. Allen, *¡Venceremos?: The Erotics of Black Self-Making in Cuba* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); and Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: The Crossing Press, 2007), 53-59.

11. See Cécile Roudeau, "How the Earth Feels: A Conversation with Dana Luciano," *Transatlantica* 1 (2015), accessed May 22, 2016, http://transatlantica.revues.org/7362. See also Dana Luciano, "The Inhuman Anthropocene," *Avidly: A Channel of the Los Angeles Review of Books* March 22, 2015, accessed May 22, 2016, http://avidly.lareviewofbooks.org/2015/03/22/the-inhuman-anthropocene/.

Bio



Kyla Wazana Tompkins

Kyla Wazana Tompkins is Associate Professor of English and Gender and Women's studies at Pomona College. She is the author of *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the Nineteenth Century* (NYU Press, 2012) which won the Lora Romero prize for best first book in American Studies and the Best Book Award from the Association for the Study of Food and Society.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Lateral
JOURNAL OF THE CULTURAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Julie Avril Minich, "Enabling Whom? Critical Disability Studies Now," *Lateral 5.1* (2016).

https://doi.org/10.25158/L5.1.9

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Critical Disability Studies
Forum: Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities
Issue 5.1 (Spring 2016)

Enabling Whom? Critical Disability Studies Now

Julie Avril Minich

ABSTRACT Advising against the potential ways in which scholarship might take up disability by fetishizing difference and reaffirming dominant models of able-bodiedness, Julie Avril Minich calls for work to be first and foremost accountable to people with disabilities: this means making knowledge accessible. In order for knowledge to be accessible, Minich stresses, the labor of accessibility must be addressed on an institutional level.

More than twenty-five years since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the promise of "equal opportunity for persons with disabilities in employment, State and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation" has not been fulfilled.[1] In a 2011 report, the World Health Organization and the World Bank demonstrated that disabled people still "experience worse educational and labour market outcomes and are more likely to be poor than persons without disabilities."[2] In the United States, these disparities are particularly sharp: The Department of Labor reports a labor force participation rate for disabled people of 19.2%, compared with 68.1% for nondisabled people, as of December 2015.[3] According to legal scholar Samuel Bagenstos, ongoing barriers to the full civic participation of people with disabilities in the United States can be found in "the structure of our health care system, under which people with disabilities can lose important Medicaid coverage if they take remunerative jobs; the continuing lack of accessible transportation and technology; and the failure of the government to fund personal attendant services."[4] Yet the public perception is that the ADA ushered in a new era of equality and rights so that no further intervention is needed. Indeed, Lennard Davis reveals that several of those who secured the law's passage "have asserted that if the ADA came up for a vote in 2015, it would be defeated."[5]

Despite this dismal legacy, the field of disability studies is thriving, as the following anecdotes attest. The Department of English at George Washington University began the 2014-2015 academic year announcing its areas of strength as Crip/Queer Studies, American Literature and Culture, British and Postcolonial Studies, and Medieval and Early Modern Studies; the positioning of Crip/Queer Studies alongside three canonized fields in a traditionally-defined department at a major research university signals institutional recognition of the field and equates the theoretical innovations of disability theory with those of queer theory. The following fall, the Women and Gender Studies Department at San Francisco State University announced a tenure-track position in Crip Theory, seeking applicants "whose work challenges parameters of the normative."[6] Acclaimed political theorist Nancy Hirschmann has provocatively claimed disability as "the new gender."[7] In fact, the inclusion of disability as a keyword for this very forum suggests that it is now

seen as a necessary site of scholarly inquiry. The question, then, becomes: What are we to make of this flourishing of disability studies at a time when the lives and life chances of disabled people remain so precarious?[8]

Without abandoning my personal and intellectual investments in (and to) critical disability studies, I am troubled by a lingering suspicion that the field's emergence as a major academic enterprise in the humanities is linked to the intensification of neoliberalism in higher education and health care. *Neoliberalism*, as defined by David Harvey, is "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade."[9] Neoliberal doctrine applied to higher education, according to Henry Giroux, results in "the corporatization and militarization of the university, the squelching of academic freedom, the rise of an ever increasing contingent of part-time faculty, the rise of a bloated managerial class, and the view that students are basically consumers and faculty providers of a saleable commodity such as a credential or a set of workplace skills."[10] In health care, neoliberalism codifies the idea that health status results from personal choices, a notion of the body as personal property whose care is an individual (not public) responsibility. For instance, despite the successes of the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) in making health care available to people without insurance, the law relies on discourses of individual choice and autonomy. It expands employers' ability to offer "wellness incentives" that purportedly encourage healthy behaviors but, as Carrie Griffin Basas argues, discriminate against people with disabilities and chronic illnesses.[11] The ACA thus encodes into law the perception that it is an individual's responsibility to maintain him/her/themself in a state of maximum able-bodiedness. In other words, curricular recognition of disability occurs even as opportunities for people with nonnormative bodies and minds to access higher education and health care are curtailed.

As a result, not all disability scholars and activists celebrate what Alyson Patsavas calls the "strange new cultural capital" of disability studies; Patsavas writes: "I worry that cashing in on this capital can too easily happen without any thorough, sustained engagement with the history of the field, its deep roots in the disability rights movement, and the responsibility that disability studies scholars have to disabled people and the fight against systematic disability oppression."[12] Where Patsavas fears a disconnect between the study of marginalized social locations and the lives of those who occupy them, others take the critique further to suggest that the embrace of certain fields may occur at the expense of the communities those fields purport to benefit. Chandan Reddy, for instance, argues that the "institutionalization of the study of race can become dangerously aligned with [...] the repressive functions of the state;"[13] Nirmala Erevelles and Andrea Minear note that "individuals located perilously at the interstices of race, class, gender, *and* disability are constituted as non-citizens and (no) bodies by the very social institutions (legal, educational, and rehabilitational) that are designed to protect, nurture, and empower them."[14] These critics urge us to ask how the embrace of disability studies might foster complacency about ongoing injustices faced by disabled people. I raise this question not to advocate the abandonment of disability studies but to encourage robust discussion about disability scholarship in a moment when the field enjoys unprecedented prominence. Where do we want the field to go? How might we foment ethical relationships between disability scholarship, disability activism, and communities of disabled people? In other words, what do we want our work to *do*?

To begin, I propose an approach to disability studies that emphasizes its mode of analysis rather than its objects of study. As disability scholars have long noted, there is an immense

body of scholarship about disabled people that few in the field recognize as disability studies: work that objectifies disability; places it under the medical gaze; pathologizes it; deploys it as a device of characterization; or uncritically treats it as a metaphor for decay, decline, or failure. At the same time, there is also an enormous body of scholarly and activist work that has until recently gone unrecognized by disability scholars *as* critical disability studies, despite advocating a radical politics of corporeal variation and neurodiversity: protests against racialized disparities in health, education, and policing; struggles for environmental justice and reproductive freedom; HIV/AIDS and fat activism; the writings of Audre Lorde on blindness and cancer and of Gloria Anzaldúa on early menstruation and diabetes.[15] Recognizing disability studies as a methodology rather than a subject allows us to explain more precisely why we might not name the former as disability studies, despite the fact that it addresses disability; it also explains why the latter might constitute a disability studies archive, even if it is not directly identified with disability.[16]

The methodology of disability studies as I would define it, then, involves scrutinizing not bodily or mental impairments but the social norms that define particular attributes as impairments, as well as the social conditions that concentrate stigmatized attributes in particular populations. In the words of the San Francisco State University Crip Theory job ad, the work of disability studies is to engage "actively with cultural and material productions of difference."[17] In this framework, the principles informing disability studies might be applied to contexts that extend well beyond what is immediately recognized as disability. Topics for disability scholarship would include many that have been inconsistently or only recently recognized in the field: fatness, STDs, mood disorders, addictions, non-normative family structures, intimate partner violence, police brutality, neurological differences, pregnancy, cancer, aging, asthma, and diabetes, to name just a few. And I must emphasize that this scrutiny of normative ideologies should occur not for its own sake but *with the goal of producing knowledge in support of justice* for people with stigmatized bodies and minds. In other words, I argue for naming disability studies as a methodology rather than a subject in order to recommit the field to its origins in social justice work. Furthermore, when I locate the origins of the field in social justice work, I mean not only the widespread US disability rights movement but also other movements for the liberation of people with bodies and minds that are devalued or pathologized but who do not consistently identify (or are not consistently identified) as disabled.

My call for a more capacious recognition of the activist movements to which disability scholars should be accountable is critical because of the field's persistent difficulty in addressing questions of race. This difficulty famously led the late Chris Bell to name the field "white disability studies."[18] More recently, Sami Schalk writes that despite frequent citations of Bell's work, there remains a need for "disability studies to make stronger academic and political connections to other identity-based fields, particularly race/ethnic and sexuality/queer studies—connections that the field has not yet been able to make thus far in substantive and lasting ways."[19] The continued paucity of work on race and disability is particularly troubling because disability is so highly racialized—both in the sense that disability is disproportionately concentrated within communities of color, which receive unequal health care and experience elevated risk of experiencing workplace injuries, environmental contamination, and state violence, and in the sense that disability is often used rhetorically to reinforce white supremacy (just as it is also used to reinforce heteropatriarchy, transphobia, colonialism, and capitalist exploitation). As Erevelles and Minear argue: "The association of race with disability has been extremely detrimental to people of color in the US—not just in education, but also historically where associations of race with disability have been used to justify the brutality of slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism."[20] The history outlined by Erevelles and Minear has

meant that efforts to resist the pathologization of non-normative bodies and minds in communities of color do not always take place under the name of disability scholarship/activism, even as they deploy what I am naming as a critical disability studies methodology.

Reframing disability studies as methodology also demands attention to the practice of teaching as well as research. In the final paragraphs of this essay, I turn to questions of pedagogy, a topic not often discussed in research publications like this one, to address how the neoliberalization of higher education impacts the accessibility of knowledge in disability studies classrooms. Giroux critiques universities' increased reliance on adjunct faculty and expanded administrative apparatuses; these trends exacerbate a situation in which, as Amy Vidali notes, instructors rely on campus disability resource offices to dictate accommodations. She writes: "teachers often respond to students with disabilities with a fearful attitude of 'getting it right,' which typically means abdicating to professionals who often know less about teachers' classrooms … than they do."[21] This problem is compounded by at least two factors. First, student disability services often rely on a medical model of disability (for instance, requiring documentation or diagnoses that can be costly, time-consuming, unsafe, or impossible for students to produce, particularly students with inconsistent health care access) that is at odds with the theoretical premises of critical disability studies.[22] Second, instructors who occupy a position of institutional vulnerability as adjunct, temporary, or untenured faculty may find meeting students' access needs overwhelming and, in some cases, unachievable; this is especially true when teachers have unmet access needs of their own. And yet the question remains: If we are not giving careful thought to how attendance policies, seating arrangements, assignments, lighting, and mode of instruction make the knowledge generated in our classes accessible or inaccessible, can we claim to be "doing disability studies," no matter how anti-normative the theory used in our research might be?

Scholars like Vidali and Margaret Price advocate supplementing disability policy blurbs on syllabi with access statements that invite students to discuss their needs with instructors regardless of whether those needs are institutionally recognized; as Alison Kafer notes, what "is powerful about the framework of access—as opposed, for example, to 'accommodation plans'—is that it requires neither diagnosis nor documentation."[23] As a teacher with an untenured but tenure-track university appointment, a teaching load of two courses per semester, and no unmet access needs of my own, I have found it immensely beneficial to my own teaching to invite students to read my syllabi carefully for access barriers and speak with me individually about how to minimize them. By placing the emphasis on barriers and not on students' impairments, I am able to mitigate (somewhat) my university's reliance on diagnosis as the criteria by which accommodations are distributed. Even more importantly, I have found that my students have much to teach me about access and pedagogy, and that my own effectiveness as a teacher improves when I make it possible for my students to have frank conversations with me about access.

At the same time, real access in education will not happen at the level of the individual course. Providing access statements on syllabi when university accommodations fall short means that the labor of access becomes individualized rather than institutionalized—and, furthermore, that it is often the most precarious faculty (untenured, disabled, adjunct, and/or temporary) who end up performing access labor that is better performed by institutions. How many departments that pride themselves on their disability studies curricula support faculty in going beyond standard accommodation models? How many universities offering disability studies courses discourage faculty from offering accommodations outside of the disability resource office? And, of course, as long as access

is not institutionalized, faculty with tenure, lower teaching loads, leverage with the administrators who assign classrooms, and lighter service burdens will remain those most able to provide accessible classes.

The methodology of critical disability studies must be both a research and a teaching methodology. It must be a methodology that proceeds not from narrowly-defined notions of what "counts" as a disability but one that seeks to radically disrupt the multiple sociopolitical ideologies that assign more value to some bodies and minds than to others. Finally, it must be a methodology enacted in and through a commitment to accessibility.

[Editors' note: Responses to this piece by Jina B Kim ("Toward a Crip-of-Color Critique: Thinking with Minich's 'Enabling Whom?'") and Sami Schalk ("Critical Disability Studies as Methodology") are published in *Lateral* 6.1 (Spring 2017), with a response by Minich.]

Acknowledgements

My gratitude to Alison Kafer, for feedback on an earlier draft of this essay; to Annyston Pennington, for research assistance; and to the students in my Fall 2015 class "Deviant Bodies: Disability, Race, Sexuality" for challenging the accessibility of my pedagogy.

Notes

1. "The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Revised ADA Regulations Implementing Title II and Title III," Americans With Disabilities Act, accessed December 4, 2015, http://www.ada.gov/2010_regs.htm.
2. "World Report on Disability," World Health Organization, 2011, accessed January 26, 2016, http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/.
3. United States Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, accessed January 26, 2016, http://www.dol.gov/odep/.
4. Samuel Bagenstos, "Disability Laws Are Not Enough to Combat Discrimination," *The New York Times*, July 26, 2015, accessed January 26, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/07/26/the-americans-with-disabilities-act-25-years-later/disability-laws-are-not-enough-to-combat-discrimination.
5. Lennard J. Davis, *Enabling Acts: The Hidden Story of How the Americans With Disabilities Act Gave the Largest US Minority Its Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 8.
6. "Crip Theory Job Ad," San Francisco State University Women and Gender Studies Department, accessed December 3, 2015, https://sites.sfsu.edu/wgsdept/crip-theory-job-ad.
7. Nancy J. Hirschmann, "Disability as a New Frontier for Feminist Intersectionality Research," *Politics & Gender* 8, no. 3 (2012): 396.
8. Throughout this paragraph, I have employed the terminology used by those I cite, making it appear that "disability studies" and "crip studies" are interchangeable, as they indeed sometimes are. However, some scholars do identify a radical potential in the word *crip* that is often missing from mainstream definitions of *disability*. As a nondisabled scholar, my current preference is the term *critical disability studies*. I also alternate between person-first language ("people with disabilities") and identity-first language ("disabled people") to emphasize that both have benefits and limitations. For theorizations of the term *crip*, see Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); and Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: NYU Press, 2006).
9. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

10. Henry A. Giroux, *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), 16.
11. Carrie Griffin Basas, "What's Bad About Wellness? What the Disability Rights Perspective Offers About the Limitations of Wellness," *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 39, no. 5 (October 2014): 1035-1066.
12. Alyson Patsavas, "Disability Studies Gains Cultural Capital? And Now What?," *The Feminist Wire,* November 22, 2013, accessed December 4, 2015, http://www.thefeministwire.com/2013/11/disabilities-studies-gains-cultural-capital-and-now-what/
13. Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the US State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 30.
14. Nirmala Erevelles and Andrea Minear, "Unspeakable Offenses: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 4, no. 2 (2010): 129.
15. Examples of what I would call critical disability work by Lorde and Anzaldúa include the following: Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name: A Biomythography* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 1982), *The Cancer Journals* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1997 {1980}), and *A Burst of Light: Essays* (Ithaca: Firebrand Books, 1988); Gloria Anzaldúa, "La Prieta," *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, eds. Cherríe L. Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015 {1981}), 198-209, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, Aunt Lute Books, 2012 {1987}), and "now let us shift … the path of conocimiento … inner work, public acts," *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, eds. Gloria E. Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating (New York: Routledge, 2012), 540-578.
16. While not all of my examples here seem controversial, it should be noted that taking the approach I advocate may require disability scholars to confront work that directly interrogates guiding principles of the mainstream US disability rights movement. For instance, in her recent work on the maiming (*not* killing) of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, Jasbir K. Puar argues: "Expressed {by Palestinian advocates} is the conviction that debilitation is a fate worse than death—death is preferable to disability—that contravenes the human rights model of disability. Why maiming is especially striking in this historical moment is because in the face of the rise of disability as a recognized vulnerable identity in need of state and global human rights protections, seeking to debilitate or to further debilitate the disabled, contrasts heavily with the propagation of disability as a socially maligned condition that must be empowered to and through a liberal politics of recognition." Jasbir K. Puar, "Inhumanist Occupation: Palestine and the 'Right to Maim,'" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21, nos. 2-3 (2015): 219.
17. "Crip Theory Job Ad."
18. Chris Bell, "Introducing White Disability Studies: A Modest Proposal," *The Disability Studies Reader,* 2nd ed., ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2006), 275-282.
19. Sami Schalk, "Coming to Claim Crip: Disidentification With/in Disability Studies," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (2013): no page, http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3705.
20. Erevelles and Minear, "Unspeakable Offenses," 132.

21. Amy Vidali, "Embodying/Disabling Plagiarism," *JAC* 31, nos. 3-4 (2011): 261.
22. As Ellen Samuels puts it, "medico-administrative definitions of disability {…}, developed and implemented in isolation from one another, are often violently contradictory in ways that severely impact disabled people's access to employment, social participation, and even the basic needs of survival." Ellen Samuels, "Fantasies of Identification," *Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Gender, Race* (New York, NYU Press, 2014): 124-25.
23. Alison Kafer, "Un/Safe Disclosures: Scenes of Disability and Trauma," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 10, no. 1 (2016): 1-20. See also: Margaret Price, *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011).

Bio



Julie Avril Minich

Julie Avril Minich is Assistant Professor of English, Mexican American & Latina/o Studies, and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, where she teaches courses in U.S. Latina/o literary and cultural studies, disability studies, and feminist/LGBT studies. Minich is author of the book *Accessible Citizenships: Disability, Nation, and the Cultural Politics of Greater Mexico* (Temple UP, 2014), winner of the 2013-2014 MLA Prize in United States Latina and Latino and Chicana and Chicano Literary and Cultural Studies. Additionally, she has articles published or forthcoming in journals such as *GLQ*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *MELUS*, and the *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, as well as in several anthologies. She is currently working on a new book about U.S. Latina/o literature, compulsory able-bodiedness, and the racialization of health, which is tentatively titled *Enforceable Care: Health, Justice, and Latina/o Expressive Culture*.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Lateral
JOURNAL OF THE CULTURAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Jodi Melamed, "Proceduralism, Predisposing, Poesis: Forms of Institutionality, In the Making," *Lateral 5.1* (2016).

https://doi.org/10.25158/L5.1.10

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Forum: Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities
Institutionality
Issue 5.1 (Spring 2016)

Proceduralism, Predisposing, Poesis: Forms of Institutionality, In the Making

Jodi Melamed

ABSTRACT Jodi Melamed reassesses the analytic of institutionality, which has largely been theorized as a dominant tool of the university in incorporating the emergent and muting the oppositional. In particular, Melamed identifies dominant discussions of institutionality that see global neoliberalism as a new, all-totalizing force. Instead, by reassessing the historical conditions of racial capitalism that make possible the 'global,' Melamed also excavates a genealogy of radical resistance that might allow us to rethink institutionality toward collective solidarity.

> "How can any institution–a school, a corporation, an army, a police force, a prison–expect to continue along with business as usual after conceding that it is founded upon structural racism and colonial settlement?
>
> And yes, who, exactly made you master?"
> – Tavia Nyong'o, "The Student Demand"[1]

> "The demand for the institutionalization of difference requires subjects that treat the administration as a matter of libido."
> – Roderick Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things*[2]

> "We owe it to each other to falsify the institution, to make politics incorrect, to give the lie to our own determination."
> – Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons*[3]

What does the act of framing 'institutionality' as a critical analytic make appear in the present conjuncture Tavia Nyong'o identifies as that of "the student demand"?[4] For Nyong'o the collective spirit of the many specific demands arising out of the surging activism of new black, queer, indigenous, undocumented, and pervasively intersectional student movements is captured by a free indirect paraphrase, a question directed ballistically at the administrative class, which presumes its authority to determine the practices and policies of the university: "Who the fuck made you master?"[5] In Nyong'o's rendering, the question conveys something like repulsion towards the institutional being of the university—specifically, its predisposed continuity exposed as structured by ongoing colonial modes of occupation and the continuance of everyday racialized dehumanization and exploitation, as well as racial killing and carceral regimes. The obscenity is that business as usual continues in and for the university despite its own acknowledgement that its conditions of possibility have been and remain slavery and its afterlives, and the eliminatory regimes of settler colonialism, past and present. How, the question implies, can that acknowledgement be fed into the machinery which articulates

discourse with practice in the university without wrecking that machinery or at least catalyzing its massive overhaul?

It remains to be seen what kinds of ruptures, antagonisms, and new arrangements will come out of this conjuncture, and what new solicitations the university will offer to its unruly students, what terms of incorporation and settlement. Yet for the purposes of this investigation, we might see the disgust in the continuity of the university—the fact that the institution can recognize its racial capitalist colonial conditions of possibility, renormalize itself without denying, forgetting, or restructuring those conditions, and simply continue—as registering a shift in the institutionality of the university, or rather, a shift in the dominant mode of institutionality at play broadly, in the university and beyond. I explore this as the *neoliberalization of institutionality*, or more precisely, as the *neoliberalization of liberal modes of institutionality*. If liberal modes of institutionality did their work, reproduced their subjects, discourses, and practices through a calculus of affirmation and exclusion which required a moralism or a moralized normative mode (that is, the codes of liberal political philosophy), if only to restrict, regulate, and differentially devalue on the basis of these moralized norms, neoliberalized institutionality operates as a 'mere' proceduralism, one that amplifies the administrative calculus and attenuates moral ideological legitimation and content.[6] The ascension of a neoliberalized mode of institutionality is also registered in the so-called 'crisis in the humanities.' This follows from the close constitutive relationship, in a weakening constellation, between 'the humanities' and liberal modes of institutionality, in which liberal modernity—a lived system of meanings and values centered in tropes of individualism, self-development, free will, civilization, the West, et.al.—appears to some to be reciprocally confirmed by the practices and discourses of the humanities, such as syllabi, course sequences, teaching philosophies, research methodologies, faculty governance, student self-reflection, etc. [7]

Institutionality, like hegemony for Raymond Williams and ideology for Althusser, "in practice…can never be singular."[8] There are not one but many kinds of institutionalities, many kinds of formal and determinate linkages of rituals, discourse, subjects, and terms of relation predisposed to reproduction and incorporation. And from the point of view of living social process, the same "institution" or "institutional domain" (i.e., the Supreme Court or the legal institution) can be crossed by multiple and conflicting institutionalities. When this is disregarded, and institutionality is presumed to be always the same, we miss opportunities for disruptive activist intellectual work at the level where past social action congeals into present social structure.

Moreover, when contemporary scholarship examines the relationship between neoliberalism and governance, but overlooks the question of institutionality, two trends may be discerned: 1) there is an explicit or implicit call for the return of liberal modes of institutionality and/or 2) a totalizing concept of institutionality makes institutions appear less and less as sites of contradiction and horizons of social struggle. Indeed, the sense we get from many scholars is that neoliberalism has either weakened or fundamentally laid waste to classic forms of liberal institutional power, such as the state, the university, and the union, or that the operative logic of most institutions has been penetrated and totally reconfigured according to neoliberalism, understood as a form of normative reason, which extends economic measures to every dimension of human existence.

An example of the first, the call for a return to liberal modes, is Saskia Sassen's work in *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*.[9] Here Sassen speaks not of institutionality, but of a global predatory assemblage of finance and debt which she describes as an epoch-making capacity and identifies by its central dynamic of expulsion: the expulsion of people from the economy, the expulsion of citizenship from territoriality through an expansive new global market in land, and the expulsion of polluted land and

water from the biosphere. For Sassen, what is remarkable about this predatory assemblage is that it yields astronomical gains for global investor classes regardless of the multiplicity of institutional forms it moves through; whether a country is autocratic, monarchic, or democratic, however its legal system is arranged, whatever its dominant culture or religion. The assemblage is, she says, conceptually subterranean because its destructive forces cut across our conceptual boundaries and evince a degree of complexity and intermediation that thwarts accountability for its brutality. She contrasts this new systemic logic of expulsion with a prior twentieth-century dynamic of state-led economic growth, which she describes as "driven by a logic of inclusion, by concerted efforts to bring the poor and the marginalized into the political and economic mainstream."[10]

Although Sassen's work is compelling in many respects, the newness and singularity of the dynamic of expulsion she highlights diminish when one considers financialization and debt today as always already configured and disposed by racial capitalism and imperial conquest. From this point of view, global assemblages of debt have not so much laid waste to liberal modes of institutionality, as they have amplified the brutal administrative proceduralism of differential devaluation, which always in practice determined the unequal outcomes of liberal modes of institutional power. Indeed, moving outside Sassen's discipline, critical ethnic studies and indigenous critical theory have long reckoned with the systemic capacities of racialization, racial capitalism, colonialism, and white supremacy to unify disparate institutional structures and determine extrainstitutional outcomes in ways that defy liberal concepts of separate spheres of institutional power. From this perspective 'expulsion' is not a new dynamic upending twentieth-century logics of 'inclusion' but internal and continuous to accumulation in political modernity.

Rather than seeing the brutality of today's financialized modes of accumulation by dispossession as novel, we might ask, what are the key differences between indigenous lands seized yesterday by way of tax debt and sold to white settlers, and lands seized today by indebted governments and sold to foreign investors? Or, what are the differences between the dynamic of "trap economics and the asset stripping" of black communities since the 1970s, following Clyde Woods's formulation, and today's global "austerity trap," which normalizes social suffering through the alibi of government debt and criminalizes workless classes?[11] Demonstrating a neoliberalization of liberal modes of institutionality, contemporary acts of dispossession appear to rely less on assimilation through citizenship than previous formations. In the first example, liberal notions of freedom and liberty (mobility) are marketized and deterritorialized, to weaken the significatory bond between land as territoriality and state sovereignty, so that land may be converted into assets, enriching an unbordered global class of financial instrument holders. In the second example, "austerity" emerges as a revamped "civilizing" discourse, repeating the former's repertoires of differential treatment, temporalizing, and devaluing —its "colonial divisions of humanity"—while replacing discourses of race and manifest destiny with discourses of debt-imposed triage and market determinism.[12]

We can consider the second trend in contemporary scholarship on neoliberalism and governance, which sees all institutions as submitting to the normative reason of financialization, by turning to Wendy Brown's work in *Undoing the Demos* on the undoing of democratic political life by neoliberal reason.[13] For Brown, the rule of neoliberal rationality transforms persons from possessive individuals to financialized human capitals, who no longer can be ends in themselves, but must invest in themselves, attract investors, and enhance their credit rating, actually or figuratively. Correspondingly, the constituent elements of democracy—liberty, freedom, rights, and popular sovereignty—

are transposed from the political to the economic, such that liberty secures inequality, freedom as self rule transposes to comportment with market rationality, rights must conform with profit-seeking or be abated, and popular sovereignty has no meaning because the concept of governance is reduced to "regulation," and made into the antithesis of neoliberalized liberty, freedom, and rights.

This is compelling political theory, but inequality rather than equality as the natural state of things—treating persons as capital, truncating freedom and social being to comport with accumulation…. Doesn't this describe the long arc of racial capitalist colonial modernity's shadow rationality? The unacknowledged evil twin of its liberal political manifest reason? From this point of view, we might describe the "undoing" Brown writes about as an "undoing" of the practices and mise-en-scène of democratic politics that confirmed the appearance of the reality of political democratic norms for felicitous (white) citizens. Under austerity regimes, US electoral politics and mainstream political processes take on the appearance, even for centered white nationals, of administrative relations of force without recourse; that is, they come to appear, at least structurally, closer to how processes always appeared in indigenous understandings of settler democracy and critiques of the US as a racial state. Under austerity, the practices that made electoral politics appear, to a financially secure white citizenry, as democracy in action—the public hearings, legislative debates, the party system, the horse trading—are diminished in their relevance to law-making. Austerity licenses "democracy" as a name for a technocracy legitimized by the imperative of debt reduction, which employs the budgetary process as law-making and thereby expels the mise-en-scène of electoral politics (legislative debates, public hearings, bids for state contracts, deliberation about how to run state institutions) from the effective political process.[14]

Instead of thinking that neoliberalism weakens institutional power in general or reduces all kinds of institutional reason to economic reason, I want to suggest that Sassen and Brown help us see the neoliberalization of liberal institutionality; liberal institutions exceed their limits by incorporating, bringing to the surface, white-washing, and generalizing their shadow racial capitalist, colonial rationalities through the brutal neutrality of numeracy and a human capital model that is equal parts racialized social death and liberal freedoms. As white solidarity becomes a bar to capital accumulation, as local elites operating under the banner of nationalism form a barrier to financialization, neoliberal institutionality overcomes these barriers by switching liberal modes of affirming and excluding to methods based on proceduralism, quantification, and abstraction. Where liberal multiculturalism has served as a pedagogy for affirming recognition and excluding redistribution, colorblindness functions pedagogically to teach compliance with proceduralism.

Where liberal institutionality requires a moralism—a discourse of civilization, respectability, or rescue—to explain away the forms of structural inequality required for capital accumulation, neoliberal institutionality just requires a *techne*, an administrative calculus that is not so much biopolitical, as biofinancialized, as connecting to the human to accrue capital through mere numeracy, virtualization, and technification.[15] This evacuation of moralism means that institutions appear less and less as sites of contradiction, or horizons of social struggle. The danger is that neoliberal institutionality appears as "institutionality" in a reified sense as mere administration, and in turn reifies institutionality as automaticity, when, in fact, institutionality—resolutions of material social process congealed into a relatively durable form—is open because it does not cease.[16]

Two important critical projects open up our thinking about institutionality by surfacing its possibilities precisely as active, material social process out of which meaning is

assembled, subjects performatively constituted, and relays for collective experience precipitated. In different ways, Roderick Ferguson in *The Reorder of Things* and Stefano Harney and Fred Moten in *The Undercommons* (projects that very much live outside these books) interrogate institutionality through and beyond the university, surfacing its neoliberalization, and calling us away from the seductiveness and stultifications of its incorporative processes, its affirmations of minoritized difference for adaptive state-capital hegemonies (in the case of Ferguson) and its asocial critical professionalism (in the case of Harney and Moten).[17] Rewriting the question, "Who the fuck made you master?" along the lines of a (not unjoyful) repudiation, perhaps "Fuck No," Ferguson and Harney and Moten confront the obscene reproduction of the university (which confirms its racial capitalist colonial conditions of existence then carries on as usual) with conceptual tools for imagining and prefiguring alter-institutionalities to support new kinds of people and collectivities.

In Roderick Ferguson's *The Reorder of Things*, "the 'academy' names that mode of institutionality and power that delivers those marginalities [minority difference] over for institutional validation, certification, and legibility, bringing them into entirely new circumstances of valorization."[18] Against the tendency to see economic forces as determining the university's ethos and its knowledge products (as in Bill Readings' work on the corporate university[19]), Ferguson demonstrates how the university, since taking on the function of producing and regulating meaning about racial difference in response to the student movements of the late 1960s, has served a pedagogical function for state and capital, teaching new modes of marketing, incorporating, commodifying, governing, and (de)valorizing minoritized subjects. For our purposes, we can track the growing neoliberalization of the institutionality of the university in Ferguson's narrativization of the university as that institutionality which produces and regulates knowledge about minority difference.

For Ferguson, the university in the late 1960s and early 1970s responds to the radical demands of student movements coming out of third world liberation, Black and Brown Power, and anti-war and American Indian movements with selective affirmation. It affirms their calls for "freedom" and "self-determination" on registers that were productive for an adaptive hegemony (recognition, cultural affirmation, commodification, and diversity industries), and, at the same time, restricts the collective, oppositional, and redistributive aims of the student movement's radical deployment of difference. In the first phase of this, power's strategy of affirming /restricting plays out around the call for black and ethnic studies, affirming professionalization while restricting radical reorganizations of knowledge. Eventually, strategies of affirming/restricting come to be centered on "excellence" and "merit," tropes that shift questions of inclusion from a historical and cultural register which locates subjects in concrete social locations, to issues of quantification and a reductive logic of calculability, reducing the dynamic character of 'race' posited by racial movement to a "fixed and discrete unit of calculation."[20] This abstraction registers the start of a shift in the dominant institutionality of the university from a liberal to a neoliberal mode.

With the incorporation of queer sexuality into the expanding neoliberal administrative ethos of the university at the turn of the twenty-first-century, what Ferguson calls "a will to institutionality" is fully realized. According to Ferguson, "As power has negotiated and incorporated differences, it has also developed and deployed a calculus by which to determine the specific critical and ruptural capacities of those forms of differences. We may call this incorporation of modes of difference and the calculus that seeks to determine the properties and functions of those modes *as a will to institutionality*."[21] With the incorporation of (queer) sexuality as an object of the administrative university,

we can mark a developed form of the will to institutionality that "requires that subjects treat the administration as a matter of libido."[22] In other words, it selects and develops (the) subject/s of minority difference such that desire attaches to administration itself, that is, to proceduralism—the continuation and normalization of the university's administrative ethos. As Nick Mitchell has recently noted about the university's response to the new black student movements, every instance of crisis produced about race is taken up as a call for more and more administration.[23]

For Ferguson, the contemporary will to institutionality stultifies, making institutionalization "a historical necessity rather than one item on a menu of interventions" and "the standard of the evolved and developed critical subject."[24] Yet, rather than calling for a romantic anti-institutionalism, Ferguson blends suspicion towards incorporation into dominant institutions "brokered in a time of affirmation" with a call for "an alternative currency," "a black currency," an alter-institutionality, whose practices and circulations are "more likely to protect and incite a dynamism around the meanings of minority culture and difference."[25] Importantly, Ferguson neither prioritizes nor rejects the university as a site of struggle. In fact, his scholarship demonstrates how the focus on one institution as a discrete field of engagement (i.e. "the university") is itself an effect of liberal modes of institutionality.

For our purposes, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, a performative event repeated with each reading, can be seen to work for a rupture of neoliberalized and liberal modes of institutionality. It works to undo and estrange their constitutive and constituting logics, their modes of individualizing, rationalizing, politicizing, critiquing, and formalizing social being into dominant 'institutions' and their 'will to fix' (apprehension of) the conditions of the material and the real. From the matrix of meaning the *Undercommons* creates, liberal and neoliberal modes of institutionality come into focus as continuous within a developing genealogy of unfreedom and truncations of social life, whose strategies include racial capitalist, settler colonial, and liberal democratic logics and practices alike. One description of the university's institutionality captures this perfectly: "The University Is the Site of the Social Reproduction of Conquest Denial."[26] Another description makes it clear that the university institutionalizes the same violence as the prison: "The university, then, is not the opposite of the prison, since they are both involved, in their way, with the reduction and command of the social individual."[27] Thus for Moten and Harney, neo/liberal institutionality, generally considered, abhors social being outside its forms. Thus sociality itself (along the lines of what they call "consent not to be one") is resistance. [28]

The performance of *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* is structured around the play of two categories of terms: 1) terms that distill the specific violences of neo/liberal modes of institutionality, which reduce and harm human capacities of sociality and continuously refresh the coloniality and raciality of institutional forms, and 2) terms that help us think and organize desire for forms of social being that are illiberally collective, unoccupied by professionalism, sociopoetical, in-the-making, and shared beyond the logics of democratic capitalist humanist Enlightenment traditions or critical moves that fall under the category of legitimation-by-reversal (i.e., the commons as reverse legitimation of privatization, redistribution as the reverse legitimation of dispossession, the critical professional as the reverse legitimation of the university as site of the social reproduction of conquest denial). While some of the terms in the first category incline towards a critique of liberal institutionality ('politics' and 'critique'), many of them catch hold of a neoliberalization of institutionality, including 'policy' and 'logistics.'

For Moten and Harney, capital today "wants control of the means [of social reproduction…]by gaining access to and directly controlling the informal experiment with

the social reproduction of life itself."[29] In neoliberal times, this requires the use of directly political forms in addition to economic compulsion. 'Policy' is a name for the form political control and command takes. It is a deputized, dispersed form of command which controls social reproduction by diagnosing 'incorrectness' for those it represents to be in need of improvement, of change, of policy. Moten and Harney counterpose 'planning' to 'policy.' "Planning is self-sufficiency at the social level, and it reproduces in its experiment not just what it needs, life, but what it wants, life in difference, in the play of the general antagonism."[30] It begins with "militant preservation" in the face of 'policy'.[31] To escape the proceduralism of 'policy,' Moten and Harney offer the sociopoesis of the statement, "There's *nothing wrong with us*."[32] Similarly, 'logistics' is a name for the "capitalist science" of the moment, which "wants to dispense with the subject altogether," to containerize "bodies, objects, affects, information" for circulation as capital, "as if it could reign sovereign over the informal, the concrete and generative indeterminacy of material life."[33] To "logistics" Harney and Moten counterpose "hapticality, or love," "the capacity to feel through others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you," a capacity attached in sociopoetic imagination to the bodies of people captured in the hold of slave ships (the first form of logistical transportation).[34]

The Undercommons, in this way, repeatedly performs the defeat of neoliberal proceduralism by the sociopoetical imagination, asserting "the necessarily failed administrative accounting of the incalculable."[35] In these performances, the concept of the 'undercommons' holds a special weight of desire and meaning, circulating as a term for "the nonplace of abolition," a beneath and beyond of the university inhabited by maroons, castaways, and fugitives, and an "appositionality" of "being together in homelessness."[36] How do the streams of meaning performatively attached to 'the undercommons' as a tool for sociopoesis frame or interact with the concept of 'institutionality,' as we've been discussing it here? In the interview that makes up the last chapter of text, in answer to a question about the relationship between the university and the undercommons, Harney states,

> I don't see the undercommons as having any necessary relationship to the university.... [T]he undercommons is a kind of comportment or on-going experiment with and as the *general antagonism*, a kind of way of being with others[. I]t's almost impossible that it could be matched up with particular forms of institutional life. It would obviously be cut through in different kinds of ways and in different spaces and times."[37]

As a "kind of comportment," a way of being and doing, the undercommons is not in contradiction with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's dictum that there is no such thing as "a non-institutional environment."[38] Rather, it's a kind of practice that cannot be encompassed by "institutional life." It may be thought of as the placeholder for a vision of sociality without institutionality, or perhaps the sociality that happens all the time beyond and below the incorporative maneuvers of dominant institutions. On the other hand, the 'undercommons' might be thought of in relation to institutionality as an excessive and ruptural sociality, a sociopoesis which demands that the active social content institutionality congeals returns to fluidity through a generative unthinking of the "hard materiality of the unreal."[39]

My suggestion for thinking about pedagogy is to advocate for thinking and teaching that renews our sense of institutions as sites where the form and appearance of social being and collectivity is determined through social action and contest, even as we problematize institutions as always explicitly incorporative, as constituted out of the durable predispositions of adaptive hegemonies. Inspired by Ferguson and Harney and Moten, my call is perhaps to work for a disruptive institutionality, to work with the paradox of

institutionality—which pits congealed social process against lived presence—to plan for what Audre Lorde called "a new and more possible meeting," for a broader sense of collective social being than neo/liberal forms of institutional power let us imagine and practice.[40] Infused with the disruptive potential of illiberal discourses of collectivity, "institutionality" can be made to line up anti-intuitively with critical rubrics that empower us to try to inhabit social being otherwise (undercommons, abolition, fugitivity), while reminding us that "radical change requires structure."[41]

[Editors' note: Responses to this piece by Leland Tabares ("The Contexts of Critique: Para-Institutions & the Multiple Lives of Institutionality in the Neoliberal University") and Tanja Aho ("Neoliberalism, Racial Capitalism, and Liberal Democracy: Challenging an Emergent Critical Analytic") are published in *Lateral* 6.1 (Spring 2017), with a response by Melamed.]

Notes

1. Tavia Nyong'o, "The Student Demand," *Bully Bloggers*, November 17, 2015, accessed February 8, 2016, http://bullybloggers.wordpress.com/author/afrofuturist/.
2. Roderick A. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 223.
3. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 20.
4. Tavia Nyong'o, "The Student Demand."
5. Until recently, Yale's residential college system employed the term "master" to designate the chief administrative officer, often a faculty member, for each of their twelve residential colleges. This colloquialism functioned as a trace of the dependence of Yale, and other US universities, on the wealth and labor of enslaved people and the dispossession and missionizing of American Indians. The term "master" was changed to "head of college" in April 2016. See Craig Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013).
6. I thank Chandan Reddy for this insight and the use of the term "proceduralism" in this formulation.
7. See Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of British Individualism from 1719-1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); and George Lipsitz, "Ferguson as a Failure of the Humanities," a lecture delivered at Princeton University on May 1, 2015, and archived at AAS21: A 21st Century Archive of African American Studies at Princeton University. Accessed February 8, 2015, http://aas.princeton.edu/publication/ferguson-as-a-failure-of-the-humanities/.
8. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 112.
9. Saskia Sassen, *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).
10. Sassen, *Expulsions*, 212.
11. See Clyde Woods, "Les Misérables of New Orleans: Trap Economics and the Asset Stripping Blues, Part 1," *American Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (2009): 769-796.
12. Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 18.
13. Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015).
14. The best examples are on the state-level in Republican-dominated legislatures. In Wisconsin, the Omnibus Budget Bill (2015) was used to substitute budget-setting for policy-making. With minimal public disclosure about even the content of budget

and the addition of many last minute items, the budget process authorized, without normal political process, the deletion of tenure from state law, the firing of most of the scientists of the State's Department of Natural Resources, and changes to the state's open records law. When the budget item giving suburban legislators control over Milwaukee schools was criticized by Milwaukee parents and students as a take-over, business interests accused the parents of "inappropriate lobbying." With debt as their rationale, "austerity" state legislatures turn their attention chiefly to administrating dispossession, a negative biopolitical mode of governance suitable for contemporary constellations of financialization. See Erin Richards, "Public school backers step up push to roll back GOP measures," *Journal Sentinel*, June 10, 2015, accessed February 7, 2015, http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/public-school-backers-step-up-push-to-roll-back-gop-measures-b99517267z1-306866841.html.

15. I thank Chandan Reddy (again) for this insight and formulation.
16. I am adapting the concept of "material social process" from Raymond Williams, "Traditions, Institutions, Formations" in *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 119. It is noteworthy that in this chapter, Williams barely discusses institutions. What comes across instead is an idea of institutions as a kind of bridge between traditions and formations. Thus institutions, for Williams, would always already be a kind of institution effect, emerging from the more determinative interplay between traditions and formations within the context of hegemonic processes.
17. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things*; Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*.
18. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things*, 144.
19. Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).
20. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things*, 105.
21. Ibid., 214.
22. Ibid., 223.
23. Nicholas Mitchell, "The Force of Diversity: Risk, Privatization and the Salaita Affair" (presentation at the Annual Convention of the Modern Language Association, Austin, Texas, January 7-10, 2016).
24. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things*, 226.
25. Ibid., 226, 227, 232.
26. Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 41.
27. Ibid., 42.
28. Ibid., 97.
29. Ibid., 75.
30. Ibid., 76.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., 50, emphasis in original.
33. Ibid., 87, 92.
34. Ibid., 97, 98.
35. Ibid., 51.
36. Ibid., 42, 96.
37. Ibid., 111, emphasis in original.
38. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York: Routledge, 1990), 5.
39. Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 24.
40. Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press Feminist Series, 2007), 123.

41. Bethany Bryson, *Making Multiculturalism: Boundaries and Meaning in U.S. English Departments* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 186.

Bio



Jodi Melamed

Jodi Melamed is Associate Professor of English and Africana Studies at Marquette University. Her current research aims to provide an anti-racist critique of contemporary capitalisms and an anti-capitalist critique of historically dominant U.S. anti-racisms. She is the author of *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011), and her scholarship has appeared in interdisciplinary journals and edited collections including *American Quarterly*, *American Literature*, *Social Text*, *African American Review*, *Critical Ethnic Studies*, *Strange Affinities: The Sexual and Gender Politics of Comparative Racialization* (Duke University Press, 2011), and *Keywords for American Cultural Studies, Second Edition* (New York University Press, 2014). Her next book project, *Dispossession by Administration*, investigates the financialization of racial colonial capitalism and the contemporary apotheosis of proceduralism as a mode of dispossession. Currently, she serves on the National Council of the American Studies Association.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Lateral
JOURNAL OF THE CULTURAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Chris A. Eng and Amy K. King, "Call for/and Response: Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities," *Lateral 5.1* (2016).

https://doi.org/10.25158/L5.1.11

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Forum: Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities
Issue 5.1 (Spring 2016)

Call for/and Response: Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities

Chris A Eng and Amy K King

ABSTRACT Call for responses to a special forum, "Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities," edited by Chris A. Eng and Amy K. King. Lateral invites responses to Part I of this forum, especially from students, junior faculty, and other emerging scholars; these will be the foundation for Part II, to be published in Lateral 6.

To formally reflect the project of imagining institutionality otherwise toward alternative humanities, this forum will stage conversations between established scholars and emerging scholars (students and junior faculty). Conventional institutional structures often premise a generational approach that privileges linear models of academic development, which can often be reproduced even within formal and informal practices of mentorship. In contrast, we aim to lateralize this relationship by juxtaposing comments by scholars across various institutional positions and intellectual trajectories side-by-side so that unexpected new relationalities may arise from these collaborations. In what ways might the stakes and uses of these analytics—settler colonialism, new materialisms, disability, and institutionality—in research and teaching shift based on one's professional position and locale? How might students, recent graduates, contingent faculty, nontenured or junior scholars approach these analytics otherwise?

To further contemplate these inquiries, we now solicit responses (1000-2000 words), especially from emergent student and junior faculty voices. Submissions may (a) respond to one or more of the four analytics posed here or (b) propose another analytic in line with the objectives outlined in this forum. Responses should be submitted for consideration to Chris A. Eng (ceng@gradcenter.cuny.edu) and Amy K. King (aking83@gatech.edu) by October 1, 2016. We invite further conversations to collectively reflect on and strategize about the continual practices needed for these emergent critical analytics and the models necessary for materializing alternative humanities.

Bio



Chris A Eng

Chris Eng is Assistant Professor of English and the Emerson Faculty Fellow at Syracuse University. He received his PhD in English from The Graduate Center, CUNY. He is currently working on his book manuscript entitled *Dislocating Camps: On Queer Aesthetics, State Power & Asian/Americanist Critique*; its dissertation form won the CLAGS 2016 Paul Monette-Roger Horwitz Dissertation Prize. His writings have appeared in *Journal of Asian American Studies*, *Lateral*, and *Women & Performance*. Chris previously served on the MLA Delegate Assembly and currently chairs the Queer

Studies Section of the Association for Asian American Studies. In 2016–2017, he was a Post-Doctoral Research Associate in Asian American Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Bio



Amy K King

Amy K. King is a Marion L. Brittain Postdoctoral Fellow at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Her current book project places depictions of women at the center of her inquiry to interrogate their involvement in empires throughout the "New World." King argues that a substantial number of recent written and visual texts employ depictions of violence between women to illuminate grotesquely violent cultural norms enacted on and continuing beyond plantation settings. Portions of this work appear in the edited collection *Reading/Speaking/Writing the Mother Text: Essays on Caribbean Women's Writing* (Demeter Press 2015). King also has two recent essays in *Mississippi Quarterly* and *south: a scholarly journal* that reconsider comparative methodologies for hemispheric American studies.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053